Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

APRIL 1955

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APRIL, 1955 VOL. 10, NO. 1

Galaxy

SCIENCE FICTION

ALL ORIGINAL STORIES • NO REPRINTS!

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GALAXY *Science Fiction* is published monthly by Galaxy Publishing Corporation. Main offices: 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y. 35c per copy. Subscriptions: (12 copies) $3.50 per year in the United States, Canada, Mexico, South and Central America and U.S. Possessions. Elsewhere $4.50. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, N. Y.

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SPEAKING OF TRENDS

THE year I wrote over a million words of fact detective cases, several pronounced reactions set in: I got dizzy trying to keep track of my pen names because I was filling whole issues, exhausted myself until I couldn't look another rape in the face . . . and developed immense respect for criminology.

All sorts of forensic experts run the crime lab, dedicated to the gathering and dovetailing of evidence that will win convictions.

Much of the work is downright beautiful in its resourcefulness and ingenuity. Seeing how cases are built up point by point is a great comfort for anyone who worries about the constant increase in crime.

But there's a side I hadn't been aware of until reading an article in *This Week Magazine,* quoting a trial lawyer named Allen Murray Myers: *"If you are accused of a crime in the U. S. today, you probably could not afford adequately to defend yourself* . . . we have set up vast, expensive machinery for getting convictions . . . but while we have been steadily strengthening the prosecutor's office, most places do not provide one cent to help the poor accused persons."

"Poor" is used financially here, though it seems to be an adjective that can describe anyone who's been through a major trial.

As an example, Myers cites the case of a man indicted for the murder of his wife: "His trial cost him $10,000; he was found guilty. It cost him $5,000 to appeal . . . The new trial cost another $10,000; again he was found guilty and again he appealed for another $5,000. This time he was set free. Total cost of proving himself innocent—$30,000."

Why so much? Well, Myers gives the case of a woman, accused of murdering her husband, whose alibi was that she was on a bus to her home town at the time. Naturally, she had to prove it.

But her ticket had been collected, so detectives would have to be hired to locate the driver, other passengers, redcaps, cabbies—anyone who might support her alibi.

Then it would be necessary to bring the witnesses to town, pay

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their expenses during the trial—plus all income lost while testifying.

The woman, of course, could not afford it. But the prosecutor, if he had to, could have done all that and a lot more.

Here is Myers' dismaying breakdown of expenses:

1. *A detective to get needed facts.*
2. *Bringing witnesses from out of town.*
3. *From* $750 *to* $1,000 *for a trial transcript.*
4. *Fees for scientific experts.*

A trial transcript is required for appeal. Scientific experts must be hired to contest the findings of the prosecutor's experts. It all adds up to ruin for the average citizen. His resources just can't match those pitted against him.

To put it starkly, crime detection has become so complex and expensive that most of us, if accused, literally could not afford to defend ourselves. The lawyers appointed to defend the penniless were once a more or less adequate gesture; they're not any longer.

Every scientific aid in the fight against crime is to be welcomed . . . but how goes the fight?

Damned badly, if you want the truth. Bergen Evans' *The Spoor of Spooks* (Knopf) quotes the Chicago Crime Commission's report that "approximately 97% of the burglaries and 91% of the robberies committed in Chicago in 1951 did not even result in an indictment." As Evans points out, "an indictment is a long way from a conviction."

The Wickersham and Seabury investigations of 20 years ago, he adds, "agreed that a criminal had about a 99% chance of escaping punishment . . . our whole prison system is geared to the expectation that there will not be more than one conviction for every 20 felonies."

The record is even worse for murder. Out of 700 professional slayings in Chicago in the last 25 years, there were less than 10 convictions! And, Evans declares, "Chicago's record is *better* in this respect than that of twenty other American cities."

All civilized countries share these problems with us.

Are there solutions? Everybody has at least one. But the tragic fact is that none has yet worked . . . and even more tragic is the realization that there are innocent persons in prison while well-heeled criminals, who can afford adequate defense, are not.

Here, then, are two exponential curves rising sharply in two opposite directions. What's the payoff? I wish I knew of one. Maybe you do.

—H. L. GOLD

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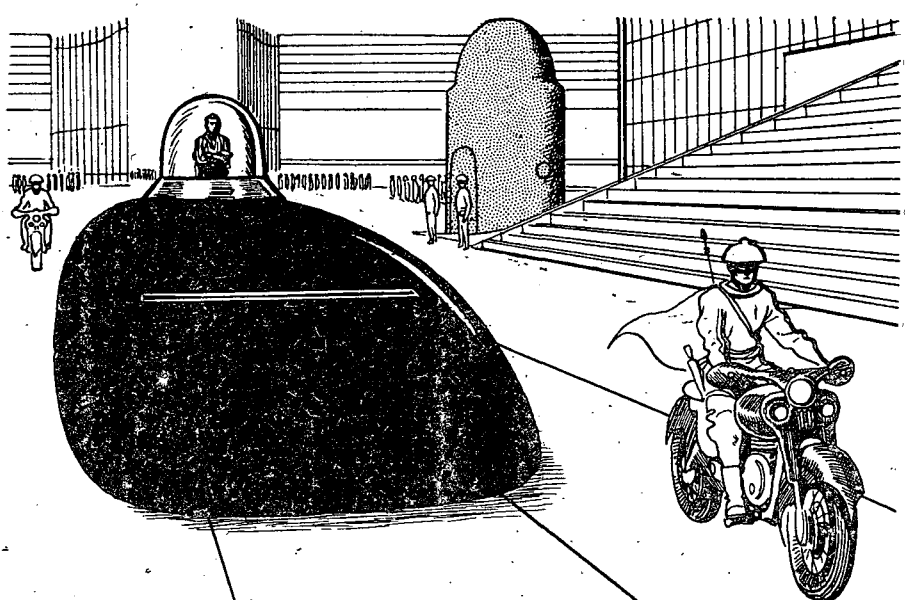
The Servant Problem

By WILLIAM TENN

When politics is a game, there is only one rule: Follow the leader. But the question is: Who's the leader and where's he going?

Illustrated by EMSH



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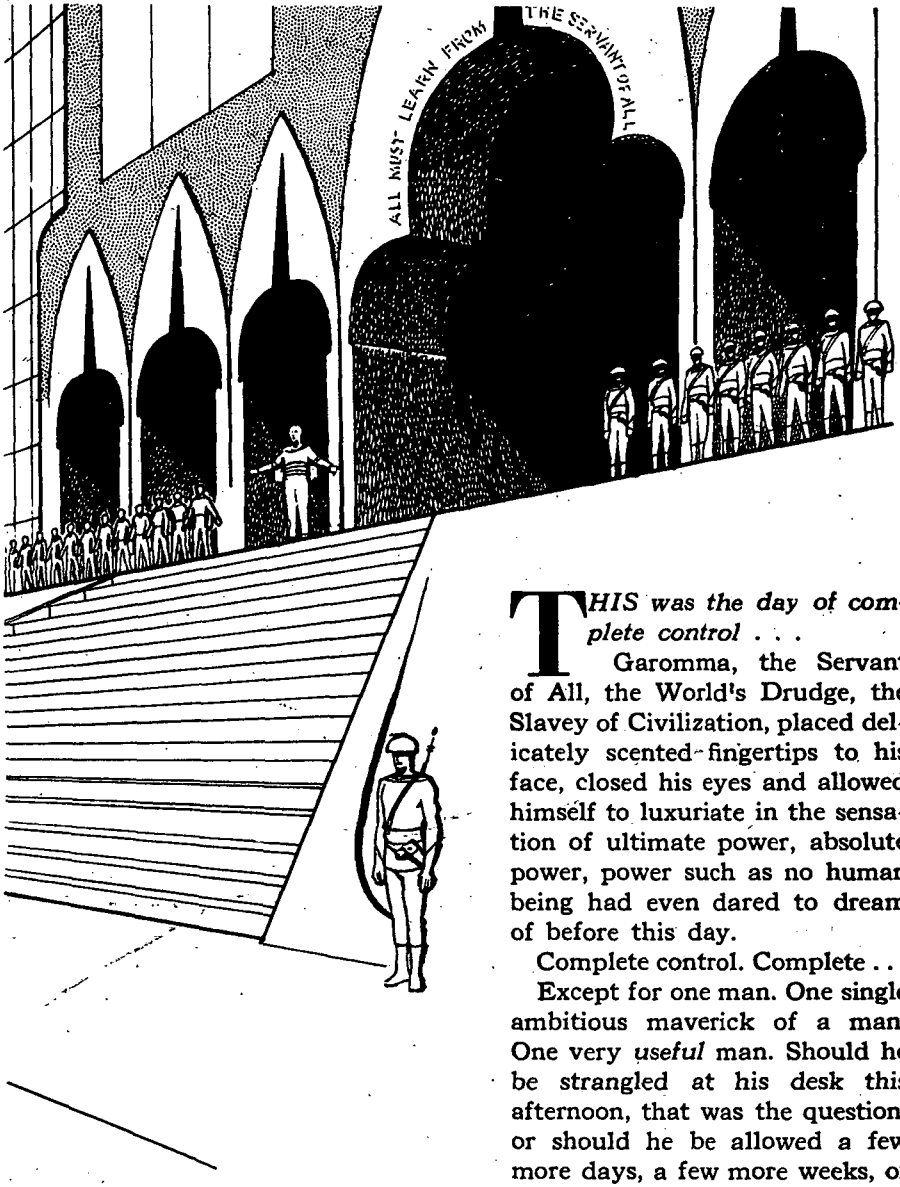

THIS was the day of complete control . . .

Garomma, the Servant of All, the World's Drudge, the Slavey of Civilization, placed delicately scented fingertips to his face, closed his eyes and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete . . .

Except for one man. One single ambitious maverick of a man. One very *useful* man. Should he be strangled at his desk this afternoon, that was the question, or should he be allowed a few more days, a few more weeks, of

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heavily supervised usefulness? His treason, his plots, were unquestionably coming to a head. Well, Garomma would decide that later. At leisure.

Meanwhile, in all other respects, with everyone else, there was control. Control not only of men's minds but of their glands as well. And those of their children.

And, if Moddo's estimates were correct, of their children's children.

"Yea," Garomma muttered to himself, suddenly remembering a fragment of the oral text his peasant father had taught him years ago, "yea, unto the seventh generation."

What ancient book, burned in some long-ago educational fire, had that text come from, he wondered? His father would not be able to tell him, nor would any of his father's friends and neighbors; they had all been wiped out after the Sixth District Peasant Uprising thirty years ago.

An uprising of a type that could never possibly occur again. Not with complete control.

SOMEONE touched his knee gently, and his mind ceased its aimless foraging. Moddo. The Servant of Education, seated below him in the depths of the vehicle, gestured obsequiously at the transparent, missile-proof cupola that surrounded his leader down to the waist.

"The people," he stated in his peculiar half-stammer. "There. Outside."

Yes. They were rolling through the gates of the Hovel of Service and into the city proper. On both sides of the street and far into the furthest distance were shrieking crowds as black and dense and exuberant as ants on a piece of gray earthworm. Garomma, the Servant of All, could not be too obviously busy with his own thoughts; he was about to be viewed by those he served so mightily.

He crossed his arms upon his chest and bowed to right and left in the little dome that rose like a tower from the squat black conveyance. Bow right, bow left, and do it humbly. Right, left—and humbly, humbly. Remember, you are the Servant of All.

As the shrieks rose in volume, he caught a glimpse of Moddo nodding approval from beneath. Good old Moddo. This was his day of triumph as well. The achievement of complete control was most thoroughly and peculiarly the achievement of the Servant of Education. Yet Moddo sat in heavy-shadowed anonymity behind the driver with Garomma's personal bodyguards; sat and tasted his triumph only with his leader's tongue—as he

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had for more than twenty-five years now.

Fortunately for Moddo, such a taste was rich enough for his system. Unfortunately, there were others—one other at least—who required more . . .

Garomma bowed to right and left and, as he bowed, looked curiously through the streaming webs of black-uniformed motorcycled police that surrounded his car. He looked at the people of Capital City, *his* people, his as everything and everyone on Earth was his. Jamming madly together on the sidewalks, they threw their arms wide as his car came abreast of them.

"Serve us, Garomma," they chanted. "Serve us! Serve us!"

He observed their contorted faces, the foam that appeared at the mouth-corners of many, the half-shut eyes and ecstatic expressions, the swaying men, the writhing women, the occasional individual who collapsed in an unnoticed climax of happiness. And he bowed. With his arms crossed upon his chest, he bowed. Right and left. Humbly.

LAST week, when Moddo had requested his views on problems of ceremony and protocol relative to today's parade, the Servant of Education had commented smugly on the unusually high incidence of mob hysteria expected when his chief's face was seen. And Garomma had voiced a curiosity he'd been feeling for a long time.

"What goes on in their minds when they see me, Moddo? I know they worship and get exhilarated and all that. But what precisely do you fellows call the emotion when you talk about it in the labs and places such as the Education Center?"

The tall man slid his hand across his forehead in the gesture that long years had made thoroughly familiar to Garomma.

"They are experiencing a trigger release," he said slowly, staring over Garomma's shoulder as if he were working out the answer from the electronically pinpointed world map on the back wall. "All the tensions these people accumulate in their daily round of niggling little prohibitions and steady coercions, all the frustrations of 'don't do this and don't do this, do *that*' have been organized by the Service of Education to be released explosively the moment they see your picture or hear your voice."

"Trigger release. Hm! I've never thought of it quite *that* way."

Moddo held up a hand in rigid earnestness. "After all, you're the one man whose life is supposedly spent in an abject obedience beyond anything they've ever

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known. The man who holds the—the intricate strands of the world's coordination in his patient, unwearying fingers; the ultimate and hardest-worked employee; the—the scapegoat of the multitudes!"

Garomma had grinned at Modo's scholarly eloquence. Now, however, as he observed his screaming folk from under submissive eyelids, he decided that the Servant of Education had been completely right.

On the Great Seal of the World State was it not written: "*All Men Must Serve Somebody, But Only Garomma Is the Servant of All*"?

Without him, they knew, and knew irrevocably, oceans would break through dikes and flood the land, infections would appear in men's bodies and grow rapidly into pestilences that could decimate whole districts, essential services would break down so that an entire city could die of thirst in a week, and local officials would oppress the people and engage in lunatic wars of massacre with each other. Without him, without Garomma working day and night to keep everything running smoothly, to keep the titanic forces of nature and civilization under control. They knew, because these things happened whenever "Garomma was tired of serving."

What were the unpleasant interludes of their lives to the implacable dreary—but, oh, so essential!—toil of his? Here, in this slight, serious-looking man bowing humbly right and left, right and left, was not only the divinity that made it possible for Man to exist comfortably on Earth, but also the crystallization of all the sub-races that ever enabled an exploited people to feel that things could be worse, that relative to the societal muck beneath them, they were, in spite of their sufferings, as lords and monarchs in comparison.

NO wonder they stretched their arms frantically to him, the Servant of All, the World's Drudge, the Slavey of Civilization, and screamed their triumphant demand with one breath, their fearful plea with the next: "Serve us, Garomma! Serve us, serve us, serve us!"

Didn't the docile sheep he had herded as a boy in the Sixth District mainland to the northwest, didn't the sheep also feel that he was their servant as he led them and drove them to better pastures and cooler streams, as he protected them from enemies and removed pebbles from their feet, all to the end that their smoking flesh would taste better on his father's table? But these so much more useful herds of two-legged, well-

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brained sheep were as thoroughly domesticated. And on the simple principle they'd absorbed that government was the servant of the people and the highest power in the government was the most abysmal servant.

His sheep. He smiled at them paternally, possessively, as his special vehicle rolled along the howling, face-filled mile between the Hovel of Service and the Educational Center. His sheep. And these policemen on motorcycles, these policemen on foot whose arms were locked against the straining crowds every step of the way, these were his sheepdogs. Another kind of domesticated animal.

That's all *he* had been, thirty-three years ago, when he'd landed on this island fresh from a rural Service of Security training school to take his first government job as a policeman in Capital City. A clumsy, over-excited sheepdog. One of the least important sheep-dogs of the previous regime's Servant of All.

But three years later, the peasant revolt in his own district had given him his chance. With his special knowledge of the issues involved as well as the identity of the real leaders, he'd been able to play an important role in crushing the rebellion. And then, his new and important place in the Service of Security had enabled him to meet promising youngsters in the other services — Moddo, particularly, the first and most useful human he had personally domesticated.

With Moddo's excellent administrative mind at his disposal, he had become an expert at the gracious art of political throat-cutting, so that when his superior made his bid for the highest office in the world, Garomma had been in the best possible position to sell him out and become the new Servant of Security. And from that point, with Moddo puffing along in his wake and working out the minutiae of strategy, it had been a matter of a few years before he had been able to celebrate his own successful bid in the sizzling wreckage of the preceding administration's Hovel of Service.

But the lesson he had taught the occupants of that blasted, projectile-ridden place he had determined never to forget himself. He couldn't know how many Servants of Security before him had used their office to reach the mighty wooden stool of the Servant of All: after all, the history books, and all other books, were rewritten thoroughly at the beginning of every new regime; and the Oral Tradition, usually a good guide to the past if you could sift the facts out properly, was silent on this subject. It was obvious, however, that what he had

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done, another could do—that the Servant of Security was the logical, self-made heir to the Servant of All.

AND the trouble was you couldn't do anything about the danger but be watchful.

He remembered when his father had called him away from childhood games and led him out to the hills to tend the sheep. How he had hated the lonesome, tiresome work! The old man had realized it and, for once, had softened sufficiently to attempt an explanation.

"You see, son, sheep are what they call domestic animals. So are dogs. Well, we can domesticate sheep and we can domesticate dogs to guard the sheep, but for a smart, wide-awake shepherd who'll know what to do when something real unusual comes up and will be able to tell us about it, well, for that we need a man."

"Gee, Pa," he had said, kicking disconsolately at the enormous shepherd's crook they'd given him, "then why don't you—whatdoyoucallit—*domesticate* a man?"

His father had chuckled and then stared out heavily over the shaggy brow of the hill. "Well, there are people trying to do that, too, and they're getting better at it all the time. The only trouble, once you've got him domesticated, he isn't worth beans as a shepherd. He isn't sharp and excited once he's tamed. He isn't interested enough to be any use at all."

That was the problem in a nutshell, Garomma reflected. The Servant of Security, by the very nature of his duties, could not be a domesticated animal.

He had tried using sheep-dogs at the head of Security; over and over again he had tried them. But they were always inadequate and had to be replaced by men. And—one year, three years, five years in office—men sooner or later struck for supreme power and had to be regretfully destroyed.

As the current Servant of Security was about to be destroyed. The only trouble—the man was so damned useful! You had to time these things perfectly to get the maximum length of service from the rare, imaginative individual who filled the post to perfection and yet cut him down the moment the danger outweighed the value. And since, with the right man, the danger existed from the very start, you had to watch the scale carefully, unremittingly . . .

Garomma sighed. This problem was the only annoyance in a world that had been virtually machined to give him pleasure. But it was, inevitably, a problem that was with him always, even

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in his dreams. Last night had been positively awful.

Moddo touched his knee again to remind him that he was on exhibition. He shook himself and smiled his gratitude. One had to remember that dreams were only dreams.

THEY had the crowds behind them now. Ahead, the great metal gate of the Educational Center swung slowly open and his car rumbled inside. As the motorcycle policemen swung off their two-wheelers with a smart sidewise flourish, the armed guards of the Service of Education in their crisp white tunics came to attention. Garomma, helped nervously by Moddo, clambered out of the car just as the Center Band, backed by the Center Choir, swung into the roaring, thrilling credo of *Humanity's Hymn*:

Garomma works day and night,
Garomma's tasks are never light;
Garomma lives in drudgery,
For the sake of me, for the sake of thee . . ."

After five verses, protocol having been satisfied, the band began *The Song of Education* and the Assistant Servant of Education, a poised, well-bred young man, came down the steps of the building. His arm-spread and "Serve us, Garomma," while perfunctory, was thoroughly correct. He stood to one side so that Garomma and Moddo could start up the steps and then swung in, straight-backed, behind them. The choirmaster held the song on a high, worshipping note.

They walked through the great archway with its carved motto, *All Must Learn from the Servant of All,* and down the great central corridor of the immense building. The gray rags that Garomma and Moddo wore flapped about them. The walls were lined with minor employees chanting, "Serve us, Garomma. Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!"

Not quite the insane fervor of the street mobs, Garomma reflected, but entirely satisfactory paroxysms nonetheless. He bowed and stole a glance at Moddo beside him. He barely restrained a smile. The Servant of Education looked as nervous, as uncertain as ever. Poor Moddo! He was just not meant for such a high position. He carried his tall, husky body with all the *élan* of a tired berry-picker. He looked like anything but the most important official in the establishment.

And that was one of the things that made him indispensable. Moddo was just bright enough to know his own inadequacy.

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Without Garomma, he'd still be checking statistical abstracts for interesting discrepancies in some minor department of the Service of Education. He *knew* he wasn't strong enough to stand by himself. Nor was he sufficiently outgoing to make useful alliances. And so Moddo, alone of all the Servants in the Cabinet, could be trusted completely.

In response to Moddo's diffident touch on his shoulder, he walked into the large room that had been so extravagantly prepared for him and climbed the little cloth-of-gold platform at one end. He sat down on the rough wooden stool at the top; a moment later, Moddo took the chair that was one step down, and the Assistant Servant of Education took the chair a further step below. The chief executives of the Educational Center, dressed in white tunics of the richest, most flowing cut, filed in slowly and stood before them. Garomma's personal bodyguards lined up in front of the platform.

And the ceremonies began. The ceremonies attendant upon complete control.

FIRST, the oldest official in the Service of Education recited the appropriate passages from the Oral Tradition. How every year, in every regime, far back almost to prehistoric democratic times, a psychometric sampling had been taken of elementary school graduating classes all over the world to determine exactly how successful the children's political conditioning had been.

How every year there had been an overwhelming majority disclosed which believed the current ruler was the very pivot of human welfare, the mainspring of daily life, and a small minority—five per cent, seven per cent, three per cent—which had successfully resisted indoctrination and which, as adults, were to be carefully watched as potential sources of disaffection.

How with the ascension of Garomma and his Servant of Education, Moddo, twenty-five years ago, a new era of intensive mass-conditioning, based on much more ambitious goals, had begun.

The old man finished, bowed and moved back into the crowd. The Assistant Servant of Education rose and turned gracefully to face Garomma. He described these new goals which might be summed up in the phrase "complete control," as opposed to previous administrations' out-dated satisfaction with 97% or 95% control, and discussed the new extensive fear mechanisms and stepped-up psychometric spot-checks in the earlier grades—by which they were to be achieved. These techniques had all been

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worked out by Moddo—"under the never-failing inspiration and constant guidance of Garomma, the Servant of All"—and had, in a few years, resulted in a sampling which showed the number of independent juvenile minds to be less than one per cent. All others worshiped Garomma with every breath they took.

Thereafter, progress had been slower. They had absorbed the most brilliant children with the new conditioning process, but had hit the hard bedrock of the essential deviates, the psychological misfits whose personal maladjustments made it impossible for them to accept the prevailing attitudes of their social milieu, *whatever* these attitudes should happen to be. Over the years, techniques of conditioning had been painfully worked out which enabled even misfits to fit into society in the one respect of Garomma-worship and, over the years, the samplings indicated the negative doctrinal responses to be receding in the direction of zero: .016%, .007%, .0002%

And *this* year. Well! The Assistant Servant of Education paused and took a deep breath. Five weeks ago, the Uniform Educational System of Earth had graduated a new crop of youngsters from the elementary schools. The customary planet-wide sampling had been taken on graduation day; collation and verification had just been completed. The results: negative response was zero to the very last decimal place! Control was complete.

SPONTANEOUS applause broke out in the room, applause in which even Garomma joined. Then he leaned forward and placed his hand paternally, possessively on Moddo's head of unruly brown hair. At this unusual honor to their chief, the officials in the room cheered.

Under the noise, Garomma took the opportunity to ask Moddo, "What does the population in general know about this? What exactly are you telling them?"

Moddo turned his nervous, large-jawed face around. "Mostly just that it's a holiday. A lot of obscure stuff about you achieving complete control of the human environment all to the end of human betterment. Barely enough so that they can know it's something you like and can rejoice with you."

"In their own slavery. I like that." Garomma tasted the sweet flavor of unlimited rulership for a long moment. Then the taste went sour and he remembered. "Moddo, I want to take care of the Servant of Security matter this afternoon. We'll go over it as soon as we start back."

The Servant of Education nod-

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ded. "I have a few thoughts. It's not so simple, you know. There's the problem of the successor."

"Yes. There's always that. Well, maybe in a few more years, if we can sustain this sampling and spread the techniques to the maladjusted elements in the older adult population, we'll be able to start dispensing with Security altogether."

"Maybe. Strongly set attitudes are much harder to adjust, though. And you'll always need a security system in the top ranks of officialdom. But I'll do the best—I'll do the best I can."

Garomma nodded and sat back, satisfied. Moddo would always do his best. And on a purely routine level, that was pretty good. He raised a hand negligently. The cheering and the applause stopped. Another Education executive came forward to describe the sampling method in detail. The ceremony went on.

THIS was the day of complete control . . .

Moddo, the Servant of Education, the Ragged Teacher of Mankind, rubbed his aching forehead with huge, well-manicured fingers and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete...

There was the one remaining problem of the successor to the Servant of Security. Garomma would want a decision from him as soon as they started back to the Hovel of Service; and he was nowhere near a decision. Either one of the two Assistant Servants of Security would be able to fill the job admirably, but that wasn't the question.

The question was which one of the two men would be most likely to maintain at high pitch in Garomma the fears that Moddo had conditioned him to feel over a period of thirty years?

That, so far as Moddo was concerned, was the whole function of the Servant of Security; to serve as primary punching bag for the Servant of All's fear-ridden subconscious until such time as the mental conflicts reached a periodic crisis. Then, by removing the man around whom they had been trained to revolve, the pressure would be temporarily eased.

It was a little like fishing, Moddo decided. You fed the fish extra line by killing off the Servant of Security, and then you reeled it in quietly, steadily, in the next few years by surreptitiously dropping hints about the manifest ambitions of his successor. Only you never wanted to land the fish. You merely wanted to keep it hooked and constantly under your control.

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The Servant of Education smiled an inch or two behind his face, as he had trained himself to smile since early boyhood. Landing the fish? That would be the equivalent of becoming Servant of All himself. And what intelligent man could satisfy his lust for power with such an idiotic goal?

No, leave that to his colleagues, the ragged high officials in the Hovel of Service, forever scheming and plotting, making alliances and counter-alliances. The Servant of Industry, the Servant of Agriculture, the Servant of Science and the rest of those highly important fools.

To be the Servant of All meant being the target of plots, the very bull's eye of attention. An able man in this society must inevitably recognize that power—no matter how veiled or disguised—was the only valid aim in life. And the Servant of All—veiled and disguised though he might be in a hundred humbling ways—was power incarnate.

NO. Far better to be known as the nervous, uncertain underling whose knees shook beneath the weight of responsibilities far beyond his abilities. Hadn't he heard their contemptuous voices behind his back?

". . . Garomma's administrative toy . . ."

". . . Garomma's fool of a spiritual valet . . ."

". . . nothing but a footstool, a very ubiquitous footstool, mind you, but a footstool nonetheless on which rests Garomma's mighty heel . . ."

". . . poor, colorless, jittery slob . . ."

". . . when Garomma sneezes, Moddo sniffles . . ."

But from that menial, despised position, to be the real source of all policy, the maker and breaker of men, the *de facto* dictator of the human race . . .

He brought his hand up once more and smoothed at his forehead. The headache was getting worse. And the official celebration of complete control was likely to take another hour yet. He should be able to steal away for twenty or thirty minutes with Loob the Healer, without getting Garomma too upset. The Servant of All had to be handled with especial care at these crisis points. The jitters that had been induced in him were likely to become so overpowering that he might try to make a frantic decision for himself. And that possibility, while fantastically dim, must not be given a chance to develop. It was too dangerous.

For a moment, Moddo listened to the young man in front of them rattle on about modes and means, skew curves and correlation co-

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efficients, all the statistical jargon that concealed the brilliance of the psychological revolution that he, Moddo, had wrought. Yes, they would be there another hour yet.

Thirty-five years ago, while doing his thesis in the Central Service of Education Post-Graduate Training School, he had found a magnificent nugget in the accumulated slag of several centuries of mass-conditioning statistics; the concept of *individual* application.

For a long while, he had found the concept incredibly difficult to close with: when all your training has been directed toward the efficient handling of human attitudes in terms of millions, the consideration of one man's attitudes and emotions is as slippery a proposition as an eel, freshly caught and moribundly energetic.

BUT after his thesis had been completed and accepted—the thesis on suggested techniques for the achievement of complete control which the previous administration had duly filed and forgotten—he had turned once more to the problem of individual conditioning.

And in the next few years, while working at his dull job in the Applied Statistics Bureau of the Service of Education, he had addressed himself to the task of refining the individual from the group, of reducing the major to the minor.

One thing became apparent. The younger your material, the easier your task—exactly as in mass-conditioning. But if you started with a child, it would be years before he would be able to operate effectively in the world on your behalf. And with a child you were faced with the constant counter-barrage of political conditioning which filled the early school years.

What was needed was a young man who already had a place of sorts in the government, but who, for some reason or other, had a good deal of unrealized — and *unconditioned* — potential. Preferably, also, somebody whose background had created a personality with fears and desires of a type which could serve as adequate steering handles.

Moddo began to work nights, going over the records of his office in search of that man. He had found two or three who looked good. That brilliant fellow in the Service of Transport, he reminisced, had seemed awfully interesting for a time. Then he had come across Garomma's papers.

And Garomma had been perfect. From the first. He was a directorial type, he was likable,

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he was clever—and he was very receptive.

"I could learn an awful lot from you," he had told Moddo shyly at their first meeting. "This is such a big, complicated place—Capital Island. So much going on all the time. I get confused just thinking about it. But you were born here. You really seem to know your way around all the swamps and bogs and snake-pits."

Due to sloppy work on the part of the Sixth District Conditioning Commissioner, Garomma's home neighborhood had developed a surprising number of quasi-independent minds on all levels of intelligence. Most of them tended to revolution, especially after a decade of near-famine crops and exorbitant taxation. But Garomma had been ambitious; he had turned against his peasant background and entered the lower echelons of the Service of Security.

THIS meant that when the Sixth District Peasant Uprising occurred, his usefulness in its immediate suppression had earned him a much higher place. More important, it had given him freedom from the surveillance and extra adult conditioning which a man of his suspicious family associations might normally have expected.

It also meant that, once Moddo had maneuvered an introduction and created a friendship, he had at his disposal not only a rising star but a personality that was superb in its plasticity.

A personality upon which he could laboriously create the impress of his own image.

First, there had been that wonderful business of Garomma's guilt about disobeying his father that had eventually led to his leaving the farm altogether—and later to his becoming an informer against his own family and neighbors. This guilt, which had resulted in fear and therefore hatred for everything associated with its original objects, was easy to redirect to the person of his superior, the Servant of Security, and make that the new father-image.

Later, when Garomma had become Servant of All, he still retained—under Moddo's tireless ministrations—the same guilt and the same omnipresent fear of punishment toward whoever was the reigning Head of Security. Which was necessary if he was not to realize that his real master was the large man who sat at his right hand, constantly looking nervous and uncertain...

Then there had been education. And re-education. From the beginning, Moddo had realized the necessity of feeding Garomma's

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petty peasant arrogance and had abased himself before it. He gave the other man the impression that the subversive thoughts he was now acquiring were of his own creation, even leading him to believe that he was domesticating Moddo—curious how the fellow never escaped from his agricultural origins even in his metaphors!—instead of the other way around.

Because Moddo was now laying plans for a tremendous future, and he didn't want them upset some day by the cumulative resentment one may develop toward a master and teacher; on the contrary, he wanted the plans reinforced by the affection one feels toward a pet dog whose nuzzling dependence constantly feeds the ego and creates a more ferocious counter-dependence than the owner ever suspects.

The shock that Garomma had exhibited when he began to realize that the Servant of All was actually the Dictator of All! Moddo almost smiled with his lips at the memory. Well, after all, when his own parents had suggested the idea years ago in the course of a private sailing trip they took together pursuant to his father's duties as a minor official in the Service of Fisheries and Marine—hadn't he been so upset that he'd let go of the tiller and vomited over the side? Losing your religion is a hard thing at any age, but it gets much harder as you get older.

On the other hand, Moddo had lost not only his religion at the age of six, but also his parents. They had done too much loose talking to too many people under the incorrect assumption that the then Servant of Security was going to be lax forever.

HE rubbed his knuckles into the side of his head. This headache was one of the worst he'd had in days! He needed fifteen minutes at least—surely he could get away for fifteen minutes—with Loob. The Healer would set him up for the rest of the day, which, on all appearances, was going to be a tiring one. And he had to get away from Garomma, anyway, long enough to come to a clear-headed, personal decision on who was to be the next Servant of Security.

Moddo, the Servant of Education, the Ragged Teacher of Mankind, took advantage of a pause between speakers to lean back and say to Garomma: "I have a few administrative matters to check here before we start back. May I be excused? It — it won't take more than about twenty or twenty-five minutes."

Garomma scowled imperiously straight ahead. "Can't they wait?

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This is your day as much as mine. I'd like to have you near me."

"I know that, Garomma, and I'm grateful for the need. But"—and now he touched the Servant of All's knee in supplication—"I beg of you to let me attend to them. They are very pressing. One of them has to do—it has to do indirectly with the Servant of Security and may help you decide whether you want to dispense with him at this particular time."

Garomma's face immediately lost its bleakness. "In that case, by all means. But get back before the ceremony is over. I want us to leave together."

The tall man nodded and rose. He turned to face his leader. "Serve us, Garomma," he said with outstretched arms. "Serve us, serve us, serve us." He backed out of the room, always facing the Servant of All.

Out in the corridor, he strode rapidly through the saluting Center of Education guards and into his private elevator. He pressed the third-floor button. And then, as the door swept shut and the car began to rise, he permitted himself a single, gentle, mouth-curling smile.

The trouble he had taken to pound that one concept into Garomma's thick head: the basic principle in modern scientific government is to keep the government so unobtrusive as to appear non-existent, to use the illusion of freedom as a kind of lubricant for slipping on invisible shackles—above all, to rule in the name of anything but rulership!

GAROMMA himself had phrased it in his own laborious fashion one day when, shortly after their great coup, they stood together—both still uncomfortable in the rags of greatness—and watched the construction of the new Hovel of Service in the charred place where the old one had stood for almost half a century. A huge, colorful, revolving sign on top of the unfinished building told the populace that FROM HERE WILL YOUR EVERY WANT AND NEED BE ATTENDED TO, FROM HERE WILL YOU BE SERVED MORE EFFICIENTLY AND PLEASANTLY THAN EVER BEFORE. Garomma had stared at the sign which was being flashed on the video receivers of the world—in the homes as well as in factories, offices, schools and compulsory communal gatherings—every hour on the hour.

"It's like my father used to say," he told Moddo at last with the peculiar heavy chuckle he used to identify a thought he felt was entirely original; "the right kind of salesman, if he talks long

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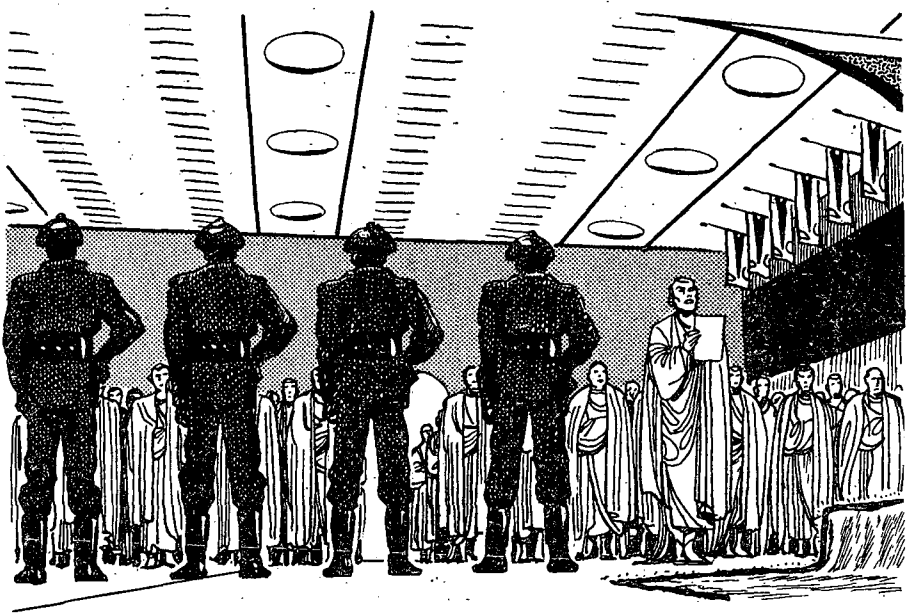
enough and hard enough, can convince a man that the thickest thorns feel as soft as roses. All he has to do is keep calling them roses, hey, Moddo?"

Moddo had nodded slowly, pretending to be overcome by the brilliance of the analysis and savoring its complexities for a few moments. Then, as always, merely appearing to be conducting an examination of the various latent possibilities in Garomma's ideas, he had proceeded to give the new Servant of All a further lesson.

He had underlined the necessity of avoiding all outward show of pomp and luxury, something the so-recently dead officials of the previous administration had tended to forget in the years before their fall. He had pointed out that the Servants of Mankind must constantly appear to be just that—the humble instruments of the larger mass will. Then anyone who acted contrary to Garomma's whim would be punished, not for disobeying his ruler, but for acting against the overwhelming majority of the human race.

And he had suggested an innovation that had been in his



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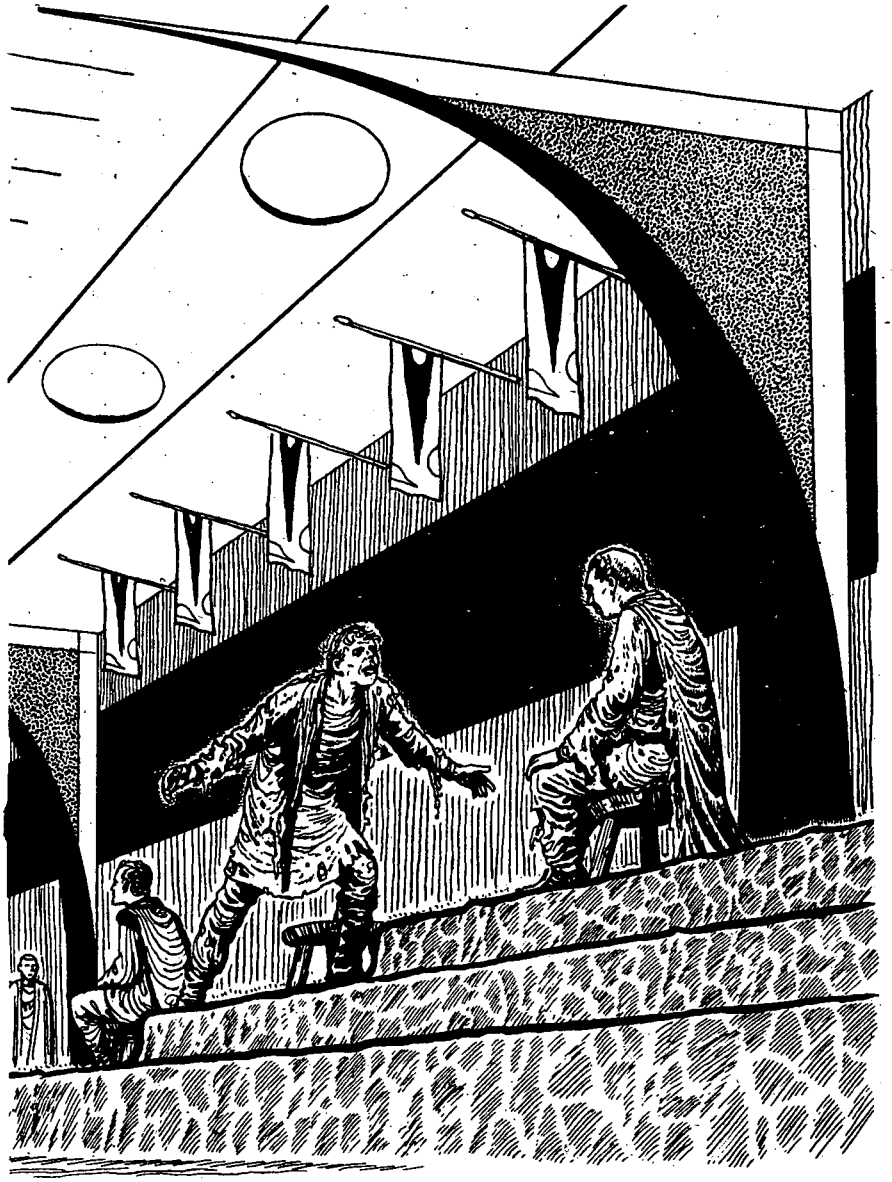

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mind for a long time; the occasional creation of disasters in regions that had been uninterruptedly loyal and obedient. This would accentuate the fact that the Servant of All was very human indeed, that his tasks were overwhelming and that he occasionally grew tired.

This would intensify the impression that the job of coordinating the world's goods and services had almost grown too complex to be handled successfully. It would spur the various Districts on to uncalled-for prodigies of frantic loyalty and self-regimentation, so that they at least would have the Servant of All's maximum attention.

"Of course," Garomma had agreed. "That's what I said. The whole point is not to let them know that you're running their lives and that they're helping you do it. You're getting the idea."

He was getting the idea! He, Moddo, who ever since his adolescence had been studying a concept that had originated centuries ago when mankind had begun to emerge from the primitive chaos of self-rule and personal decision into the organized social universe of modern times . . . *he* was getting the idea!

HE had smirked gratefully. But he had continued applying to Garomma himself the techniques that he was teaching Garomma to apply to the mass of men as a whole. Year in, year out, seemingly absorbed in the immensities of the project he had undertaken on behalf of the Service of Education, he had actually left its planning in the hands of subordinates while he concentrated on Garomma.

And today, while superficially acquiring complete control over the minds of an entire generation of human beings, he had tasted for the first time complete control over Garomma. For the past five years, he had been attempting to crystallize his ascendancy in a form that was simpler to use than complicated need-mechanisms and statement-patterns.

Today, for the first time, the weary hours of delicate, stealthy conditioning had begun to work out perfectly. The hand-signal, the touch-stimulus that he had organized Garomma's mind to respond to, had resulted in the desired responses every single time!

As he walked down the third-floor corridor to Loob's modest office, he searched for an adequate expression. It was like, he decided, being able to turn a whole vast liner by one touch on the wheel. The wheel activated the steering engine, the steering engine pushed against the enormous weight of rudder, and the

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rudder's movements eventually forced the great ship to swing about and change its course.

No, he reflected, let Garomma have his glorious moments and open adulation, his secret palaces and multitudes of concubines. He, Moddo, would settle for the single, occasional touch . . . and complete control.

The anteroom to Loob's office was empty. He stood there impatiently for a moment, then called out: "Loob! Isn't anyone taking care of this place? I'm in a hurry!"

A plump little man with a tiny pointed beard on his chin came scurrying out of the other room. "My secretary—everyone had to go downstairs when the Servant of All entered—things are so disrupted—she hasn't returned yet. But I was careful," he went on, catching up to his own breath, "to cancel all my appointments with other patients while you were in the building. Please come in."

Moddo stretched himself out on the couch in the Healer's office. "I can only spare about—about fifteen minutes. I have a very important decision to make, and I have a headache that's gouging out my—my brains."

Loob's fingers circled Moddo's neck and began massaging the back of his head with a serene purposefulness. "I'll do what I can. Now try to relax. Relax. That's right. *Relax*. Doesn't this help?"

"A lot," Moddo sighed. He must find some way of working Loob into his personal entourage, to be with him whenever he had to travel with Garomma. The man was *invaluable*. It would be wonderful to have him always available in person. Just a matter of conditioning Garomma to the thought. And now *that* could be handled with the same suggestion. "Do you mind if I just talk?" he inquired. "I don't feel very much—very much like free association."

Loob sat down in the heavily upholstered chair behind the desk. "Do whatever you want. If you care to, go into what's troubling you at the moment. All we can hope to do in fifteen minutes is help you relax."

Moddo began to talk.

THIS was the day of complete control. . .

Loob, the Healer of Minds, the Assistant to the Third Assistant Servant of Education, threaded his fingers through the small, triangular beard that was his professional badge and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

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Complete control. Complete...

It would have been extremely satisfying to have handled the Servant of Security matter directly, but such pleasures would come in time. His technicians in the Bureau of Healing Research had almost solved the problem he had set them. Meanwhile he still had revenge and the enjoyment of unlimited dominion.

He listened to Moddo talking of his difficulties in a carefully guarded, non-specific fashion and held up a round fat hand to cover his grin. The man actually believed that after seven years of close therapeutic relationship, he could conceal such details from Loob!

But of course. He had to believe it. Loob had spent the first two years restructuring his entire psyche upon that belief, and then—and only then—had begun to effect transference on a total basis. While the emotions Moddo felt toward his parents in childhood were being duplicated relative to the Healer, Loob had begun to probe in the now unsuspicious mind. At first he hadn't believed what the evidence suggested. Then, as he got to know the patient much better he became completely convinced and almost breathless at the scope of his windfall.

For more than twenty-five years, Garomma, as the Servant of All, had ruled the human race, and for longer than that, Moddo, as a sort of glorified personal secretary, had controlled Garomma in every important respect.

So, for the past five years, he, Loob, as psychotherapist and indispensable crutch to an uncertain, broken ego, had guided Moddo and thus reigned over the world, undisputed, unchallenged —and thoroughly unsuspected.

The man behind the man behind the throne. What could be safer than that?

OF course, it would be more efficient to fasten his therapeutic grip directly on Garomma. But that would bring him out in the open far too much. Being the Servant of All's personal mental physician would make him the object of jealous scrutiny by every scheming high-echelon cabal.

No, it was better to be the one who had custody of the custodian, especially when the custodian appeared to be the most insignificant man in all the Hovel of Service officialdom.

And then, some day, when his technicians had come up with the answer he required, he might dispose of the Servant of Education and control Garomma at firsthand, with the new method.

He listened with amusement to

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Moddo discussing the Servant of Security matter in terms of a hypothetical individual in his own department who was about to be replaced. The question was which one of two extremely able subordinates should be given his job?

Loob wondered if the patient had any idea how transparent his subterfuges were. No, they rarely did. This was a man whose upset mind had been so manipulated that its continued sanity depended on two factors: the overpowering need to consult Loob whenever anything even mildly delicate came up, and the belief that he could be consulted without revealing the actual data of the situation.

When the voice on the couch had come to the end of its ragged, wandering summation, Loob took over. Smoothly, quietly, almost tonelessly, he reviewed what Moddo had said. On the surface, he was merely restating the concepts of his patient in a more coherent way. Actually, he was reformulating them so that, considering his personal problems and basic attitudes, the Servant of Education would have no alternative. He would have to select the younger of the two candidates, the one whose background had included the least opposition to the Healers Guild.

Not that it made very much difference. The important thing was the proof of complete control. That was implicit in having made Moddo convince Garomma of the necessity of getting rid of a Servant of Security at a time when the Servant of All faced no particular mental crisis. When, in fact, his euphoria was at its height.

But there was, admittedly, the additional pleasure in finally destroying the man who, years ago as Chief of the Forty-seventh District's Security, had been responsible for the execution of Loob's only brother. The double achievement was as delicious as one of those two-flavor tarts for which the Healer's birthplace was famous. He sighed reminiscently.

Moddo sat up on the couch. He pressed his large, spreading hands into the fabric on either side and stretched. "You'd be amazed how much help this one short session has been, Loob. The—the headache's gone, the—the confusion's gone. Just talking about it seems to clarify everything. I know exactly what I have to do now."

"Good," drawled Loob the Healer in a gentle, carefully detached voice.

"I'll try to get back tomorrow for a full hour. And I've been thinking of having you transferred to my personal staff, so that

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you can straighten out—straighten out the kinks at the time they occur. I haven't reached a decision on it yet, though."

Loob shrugged and escorted his patient to the door. "That's entirely up to you. However you feel I can help you most."

HE watched the tall, husky man walking down the corridor to the elevator. *"I haven't reached a decision on it yet, though."* Well, he wouldn't—not until Loob did. Loob had put the idea into his mind six months ago, but had deferred having him take action on it. He wasn't sure that it would be a good idea to get even that close to the Servant of All as yet. And there was that wonderful little project in the Bureau of Healing Research which he still wanted to give maximum daily attention.

His secretary came in and went right to work at her typewriter. Loob decided to go downstairs and check on what had been done today. With all the fanfare attendant upon the Servant of All's arrival to celebrate complete control, the researchers' routine had no doubt been seriously interrupted. Still, the solution might come at any time. And he liked to examine their lines of investigation for potential fruitfulness: these technicians were blunderingly unimaginative!

As he walked down to the main floor, he wondered if Moddo, anywhere in the secret depths of his psyche, had any idea of how much he had come to depend on the Healer, how thoroughly he needed him. The fellow was such a tangle of anxiety and uncertainty—losing his parents as a child, the way he had, of course had not helped too much, but his many repressions had been in existence even then. He had never even remotely suspected that the reason he wanted Garomma to be the ostensible leader was because he was afraid of taking personal responsibility for anything. That the fake personality he was proud of presenting to the world was his real personality, the difference being that he had learned to use his fears and timidity in a positive fashion. But only up to a point. Seven years ago, when he had looked up Loob ("a fast bit of psychotherapy for some minor problems I've been having"), he'd been on the point of complete collapse. Loob had repaired the vast flapping structure on a temporary basis and given it slightly different functions. Functions for Loob.

He couldn't help wondering further if the ancients would have been able to do anything basic for Moddo. The ancients, according to the Oral Tradition at least;

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had developed, just before the beginning of the modern era, a psychotherapy that accomplished wonders of change and personal reorganization for the individual.

But to what end? No serious attempt to use the method for its obvious purpose, for the only purpose of any method . . . *power*. Loob shook his head. Those ancients had been so incredibly naive! And so much of their useful knowledge had been lost. Concepts like super-ego merely existed in the Oral Tradition of the Healers Guild as words; there was no clue as to their original meaning. They might be very useful today, properly applied.

ON the other hand, were most of the members of his own modern Healers Guild across the wide sea, any less naive, including his father and the uncle who was now its reigning head? From the day when he had passed the Guild's final examinations and begun to grow the triangular beard of master status, Loob had seen that the ambitions of his fellow-members were ridiculously limited. Here, in this very city, where, according to legend, the Guild of the Healers of Minds had originated, each member asked no more of life than to use his laboriously learned skill at transference to acquire power over the lives of ten or fifteen wealthy patients.

Loob had laughed at these sparse objectives. He had seen the obvious goal which his colleagues had been overlooking for years. The more powerful the individual whom you subjected to transference and in whom you created a complete dependence, the more power you, as his healer, enjoyed. The world's power center was on Capital Island across the great ocean to the east. And it was there that Loob determined to go.

It hadn't been easy. The strict rules of custom against changing your residence except on official business had stood in his way for a decade. But once the wife of the Forty-seventh District's Communications Commissioner had become his patient, it got easier. When the commissioner had been called to Capital Island for promotion to the Second Assistant Servantship of Communication, Loob had gone with the family; he was now indispensable. Through them he had secured a minor job in the Service of Education. Through that job, practicing his profession on the side, he had achieved enough notice to come to the august attention of the Servant of Education himself.

He hadn't really expected to go this far. But a little luck, a

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great deal of skill and constant, unwinking alertness had made an irresistible combination. Forty-five minutes after Moddo had first stretched out on his couch, Loob had realized that he, with all of his smallness and plumpness and lack of distinction, was destined to rule the world.

Now the only question was what to do with that rule. With wealth and power unlimited.

WELL, for one thing there was his little research project. That was very interesting, and it would serve, once it came to fruition, chiefly to consolidate and insure his power. There were dozens of little pleasures and properties that were now his, but their enjoyment tended to wear off with their acquisition. And finally there was knowledge.

Knowledge. Especially forbidden knowledge. He could now enjoy it with impunity. He could collate the various Oral Traditions into one intelligible whole and be the only man in the world who knew what had really happened in the past. He had already discovered, through the several teams of workers he had set at the task, such tidbits as the original name of his birthplace, lost years ago in a numbering system that had been created to destroy patriotic associations inimical to the world state. Long before it had been the Fifth City of the Forty-seventh District, he had learned, it had been Austria, the glorious capital of the proud Viennese Empire. And this island on which he stood had been Havanacuba, no doubt once a great empire in its own right which had established hegemony over all other empires somewhere in the dim war-filled beginnings of modern times.

Well, these were highly personal satisfactions. He doubted very much if Garomma, for example, would be interested to know that he hailed, not from the Twentieth Agricultural Region of the Sixth District, but from a place called Canada, one of the forty-eight constituent republics of the ancient Northern United States of America. But he, Loob, was interested. Every additional bit of knowledge gave you additional power over your fellowmen, that some day, some way, would be usable.

Why, if Moddo had had any real knowledge of the transference techniques taught in the upper lodges of the Guild of the Healers of Minds, he might still be running the world himself! But no. It was inevitable that a Garomma should actually be no more than a creature, a thing, of Moddo. It was inevitable that a Moddo, given the peculiar forces that had formed him, should in-

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exorably have had to come to Loob and pass under his control. It was also inevitable that Loob, with his specialized knowledge of what could be done with the human mind, should be the only independent man on Earth today. It was also very pleasant.

He wriggled a little bit, very satisfied with himself, gave his beard a final finger-comb, and pushed into the Bureau of Healing Research.

THE chief of the bureau came up rapidly and bowed. "Nothing new to report today." He gestured at the tiny cubicles in which the technicians sat at old books or performed experiments on animals and criminally convicted humans. "It took them a while to get back to work, after the Servant of All arrived. Everyone was ordered out into the main corridor for regulation empathizing with Garomma."

"I know," Loob told him. "I don't expect much progress on a day like this. Just so you keep them at it. It's a big problem."

The other man shrugged enormously. "A problem which, as far as we can tell, has never been solved before. The ancient manuscripts we've discovered are all in terrible shape, of course. But those that mention hypnotism all agree that it can't occur under any of the three conditions you want: against the individual's will, contrary to his personal desires and best judgment, and maintaining him over a long period of time in the original state of subjection without need for new applications. I'm not saying it's impossible, but—"

"But it's very difficult. Well, you've had three and a half years to work on it, and you'll have as much more time as you need. *And* equipment. *And* personnel. Just ask. Meanwhile, I'll wander around and see how your men are doing. You needn't come with me. I like to ask my own questions."

The bureau chief bowed again and turned back to his desk in the rear of the room. Loob, the Healer of Minds, the Assistant to the Third Assistant Servant of Education, walked slowly from cubicle to cubicle, watching the work, asking questions, but mostly noting the personal quality of the psychological technician in each cubicle.

He was convinced that the right man could solve the problem. And it was just a matter of finding the right man and giving him maximum facilities. The right man would be clever enough and persistent enough to follow up the right lines of research, but too unimaginative to be appalled by a goal which had eluded the best minds for ages.

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And once the problem was solved—then in one short interview with Garomma, he could place the Servant of All under his direct, personal control for the rest of his life and dispense with the complications of long therapeutic sessions with Moddo where he constantly had to suggest, and suggest in roundabout fashion, rather than give simple, clear and unambiguous orders. Once the problem was solved—

He came to the last cubicle. The pimply-faced young man who sat at the plain brown table studying a ripped and damp-rotted volume didn't hear him come in. Loob studied him for a moment.

What frustrated, bleak lives these young technicians must lead! You could see it in the tightly set lines of their all-too-similar faces. Growing up in one of the most rigidly organized versions of the world state that a ruler had yet contrived, they didn't have a thought that was in any way their own, could not dream of tasting a joy that had not been officially allotted to them.

And yet this fellow was the brightest of the lot. If any one in the Bureau of Healing Research could develop the kind of perfect hypnotic technique Loob required, he could. Loob had been watching him with growing hope for a long time now.

"How is it coming, Sidothi?" he asked.

Sidothi looked up from his book.

"Shut the door," he said.

Loob shut the door.

THIS was the day of complete control . . .

Sidothi, the Laboratory Assistant, Psychological Technician Fifth Class, snapped his fingers in Loob's face and allowed himself to luxuriate in the sensation of ultimate power, absolute power, power such as no human being had even dared to dream of before this day.

Complete control. Complete...

Still sitting, he snapped his fingers again.

He said: "Report."

The familiar glazed look came into Loob's eyes. His body stiffened. His arms hung limply at his sides. In a steady, toneless voice he began to deliver his report.

Magnificent. The Servant of Security would be dead in a few hours and the man Sidothi liked would take his place. For an experiment in complete control, it had worked out to perfection. That was all it had been; an attempt to find out if—by creating a feeling of vengefulness in Loob for the sake of a non-existent brother—he could force the Healer to act on a level he always

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wanted to avoid; making Moddo do something that the Servant of Education had no interest at all in doing. That was to prod Garomma into an action against the Servant of Security at a time when Garomma was in no particular mental crisis.

The experiment had worked perfectly. He'd pushed a little domino named Loob three days ago, and a whole series of other little dominoes had begun to fall one right after the other. Today, when the Servant of Security was strangled at his desk, the last one would have fallen.

Yes, control was absolutely complete.

Of course, there had been another, minor reason why he had elected to conduct this experiment in terms of the Servant of Security's life. He didn't like the man. He'd seen him drink a liqueur in public four years ago. Sidothi didn't believe the Servants of Mankind should do such things. They should lead clean, simple, abstemious lives; they should be an example to the rest of the human race.

He'd never seen the Assistant Servant of Security whom he had ordered Loob to have promoted, but he had heard that the fellow lived very narrowly, without luxury even in private. Sidothi liked that. That was the way it should be.

LOOB came to the end of his report and stood waiting. Sidothi wondered whether he should order him to give up this bad, boastful idea of controlling Garomma directly. No, that wouldn't do: that attitude led into the mechanism of coming down to the Bureau of Healing Research every day to check on progress. While a simple order to come in daily would suffice, still Sidothi felt that until he had examined all aspects of his power and become thoroughly familiar with its use, it was wise to leave original personality mechanisms in place, so long as they didn't get in the way of anything important.

And that reminded him. There *was* an interest of Loob's which was sheer time-wasting. Now, when he was certain of absolute control, was a good time to get rid of it.

"You will drop this research into historical facts," he ordered. "You will use the time thus freed for further detailed examination of Moddo's psychic weaknesses. And you will find that more interesting than studying the past. That is all."

He snapped his fingers in Loob's face, waited a moment, then snapped them again. The Healer of Minds took a deep breath, straightened and smiled.

"Well, keep at it," he said, encouragingly.

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"Thank you, sir. I will," Sidothi assured him.

Loob opened the door of the cubicle and walked out, pompously, serenely. Sidothi stared after him. The idiotic assurance of the man—that once the process of complete control by hypnotic technique was discovered, it would be given to Loob!

Sidothi had begun to reach the answer three years ago. He had immediately covered up, letting his work take a superficially different line. Then, when he had the technique perfected, he'd used it on Loob himself. Naturally.

At first he'd been shocked, almost sickened, when he found out how Loob controlled Moddo, how Moddo controlled Garomma, the Servant of All. But after a while, he'd adjusted to the situation well enough. After all, ever since the primary grades, the only reality he and his contemporaries had accepted completely was the reality of power. Power in each class, in each club, in each and every gathering of human beings, was the only thing worth fighting for. And you chose an occupation not only because you were most fitted for it, but because it gave the greatest promise of power to a person of your particular interests and aptitudes.

But he'd never dreamed of, never imagined, this much power! Well, he had it. That was reality, and reality was to be respected above all else. Now the problem was what to do with his power.

And that was a very hard question to answer. But the answer would come in time. Meanwhile, there was the wonderful chance to make certain that everyone did his job right, that bad people were punished. He intended to stay in his menial job until the proper time came for promotion. There was no need at the moment to have a big title. If Garomma could rule as the Servant of All, he could rule Garomma at third or fourth hand as a simple Psychological Technician Fifth Class.

But in what way exactly did he want to rule Garomma? What important things did he want to make Garomma do?

A BELL rang. A voice called out of loudspeaker set high in the wall. "Attention! Attention, all personnel! The Servant of All will be leaving the Center in a few minutes. Everyone to the main corridor to beg for his continued service to mankind. Everyone—"

Sidothi joined the mob of technicians pouring out of the huge laboratory room. People were coming out of offices on both sides of them. He was swept up with a crowd constantly enlarging from the elevators and stairways to the main corridor where the Service

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of Education guards prodded them and jammed them against the walls.

He smiled. If they only knew whom they were pushing! Their ruler, who could have any one of them executed. The only man in the world who could do anything he wanted to do. *Anything.*

There was sudden swirling movement and a cheer at the far distant end of the corridor. Everyone began to shuffle about nervously, everyone tried to stand on tip-toe in order to see better. Even the guards began to breathe faster.

The Servant of All was coming.

The cries grew more numerous, more loud. People in front of them were heaving about madly. And suddenly Sidothi saw him!

His arms went up and out in a flashing paroxysm of muscles. Something tremendous and delighted seemed to press on his chest and his voice screamed, "Serve us, Garomma! Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!" He was suffused with heaving waves of love, love such as he never knew anywhere else, love for Garomma, love for Garomma's parents, love for Garomma's children, love for anything and everything connected with Garomma. His body writhed, almost without coordination, delicious flames licked up his thighs and out from his armpits, he twisted and turned, danced and hopped, his very stomach seeming to strain against his diaphragm in an attempt to express its devotion. None of which was very strange, considering that these phenomena had been conditioned in him since early childhood . . .

"Serve us, Garomma!" he shrieked, bubbles of saliva growing out of the corner of his mouth. "Serve us! Serve us! Serve us!"

He fell forward, between two guards, and his outstretched fingertips touched a rustling flapping rag just as the Servant of All strode by. His mind abruptly roared off into the furthest, most hidden places of ecstasy. He fainted, still babbling. "*Serve* us, O Garomma."

When it was all over, his fellow-technicians helped him back to the Bureau of Healing Research. They looked at him with awe. It wasn't every day you managed to touch one of Garomma's rags. What it must do to a person!

It took Sidothi almost half an hour to recover.

THIS WAS THE DAY OF COMPLETE CONTROL.

—WILLIAM TENN

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don't shoot

A man has to have a place to confess a horrible sin . . . and this is as good as any other!

By ROBERT ZACKS

Illustrated by ASHMAN

I CAN no longer keep my terrible secret, although the thought of what will happen to me, when I tell my story, gives me a trembling from head to toe. Without doubt, word will flash to the proper authorities and stern-faced men with sympathetic eyes will bring straitjacket and sedatives, and hunt me down to tear me from Mary's clinging arms. A padded cell will be made ready for another unfortunate.

Nevertheless what we have just read in the newspapers has made us fearfully agree that I must tell all, regardless of my own fate. So let me say this:

If it is true that an expedition is being organized in London to go to the cold and rocky wastes of the Himalayas for the purpose of investigating that astonishing primeval creature called 'The Abominable Snowman,' then I am forced to tell you immediately . . . *the Abominable Snowman is none other than Mr.*

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Eammer, the famous movie magnate.

And I am the one responsible for this amazing situation. I and my invention which Mr. Eammer had hired me to develop, an invention which would put 3-D and Cinemascope and the new Largoscope process so far behind in the fierce Hollywood battle for supremacy that Mr. Eammer would at last have complete control of the industry, and, for that matter, television also.

You will say this is impossible because one or two glimpses of the Abominable Snowman have shown it to be an apelike creature?

And the animal's body is covered with thick, coarse hair?

Well, did you ever see Mr. Eammer lounging beside his elaborate Beverly Hills swimming pool? He looks as if he's just climbed down from a tree. The last young movie lovely an agent had brought around to talk contracts took one look, screamed and fainted. It is said she was hysterical for two days.

BUT let me tell how it all started. Remember those awful days when television, like a monster with a wild pituitary gland, grew until it took the word 'colossal' away from filmdom? What a battle! Like two giant bears rearing up face to face, roaring, screaming, swapping terrible blows of mighty paws, the two industries fought, with the film industry reeling bloodily, at first, then rallying with 3-D, then Cinemascope, and television pressing home the fierce attack with color TV.

And who was caught in the middle of all this, without *any* protection? Mr. Eammer. Why? Well, let me give you some background on that character. When talkies killed the era of silent films, Mr. Eammer nearly got shaken loose in the change. He'd scornfully dismissed the new development.

"Ha," he'd said. "People come to my movies for one of two things. To fall asleep, or to look at the pretty girlies."

When the movie industry began to look for good stories and material that stimulated the mind as well as the emotion, Mr. Eammer had jeered. "Ha. People are stupid, people are sheep. They don't want to think, they just want to see the pretty girlies."

Six months later, Mr. Eammer had sent emissaries to England to try to hire this guy Billy Shakespeare. "Offer him anything," ordered Mr. Eammer grimly. "Tell him we'll fill the water cooler in his office with gin, he can pick any secretary he likes from among our starlets,

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and . . . and . . ." he swallowed, then recklessly added, "we'll even give him screen credit."

Of course the men he'd sent out searching knew Billy Shakespeare had kicked off, though they weren't sure whether it was last year or ten years ago. But it was a fine trip on the expense account and after a few weeks of riotous searching in London's gayer areas, they wired that Shakespeare had caught a bad cold, the penicillin had run out and he'd not lasted the night.

But Mr. Eammer pulled out of his situation. He bought up just the right to use the titles of great classic novels, ignored the contents, and had entirely different stories written.

"Not enough girlies in their versions," he explained, frowning. "Them hack writers don't have stuff with real interest to it."

BY the time the customers were in the packed movie houses, they were so stunned with the spectacle of unclad femininity that they'd completely forgotten what they'd come to see. Half of them had never read the classics anyway.

So the dough rolled in and Mr. Eammer's estate was photographed in color and published in "Beautiful Homes" magazines, and high school newspapers sent nervous young reporters to ask advice for graduates yearning to get into the movie business. How, they asked humbly, could they carve a place for themselves?

Mr. Eammer beamed and said, "Girlies. Use plenty of girlies. It gets them every time."

The printed interview, as approved and edited by high school faculty advisors, did not contain this advice.

But the girlies weren't enough to save Mr. Eammer when television hit the movies on its glass jaw. He didn't believe what was happening, until it was too late. When his studio started hitting the skids, he hastily withdrew funds and liquidated assets and rented a number of safe-deposit boxes. Then he sat back and let his creditors scream a symphony of threats.

It was at that time that Mr. Eammer heard that I, a young physicist interested in optics, had stumbled across an oddity which might revolutionize the movie industry. He'd heard of this through Mary, whom I love with all my heart, and who will sometimes embarrass me by proudly telling people how intelligent I am.

As Mr. Eammer's secretary, she let him know all about me, just as she let me know all I have just told you about him. Mary is not a reticent person; she is too loving of her fellow man to

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withhold even the slightest information and perhaps I should have kept my astonishing discovery to myself.

In any case the phone rang in my very small laboratory one day and Mary's excited voice said, "Joe, darling. It's me. I told him about your invention. Come down right away."

"Who?" I said. "Where? What are you talking about?"

"To the studio," she said impatiently. "To see my boss, Mr. Eammer. He says if your invention is . . ."

"Now wait a minute," I shouted with indignation. "I told you not to tell *anybody* about it. It's not perfected. In fact, I don't understand how it works exactly."

"Stop being so modest," she said firmly. "I know you. You're a genius and genius is never, never satisfied. I read all about it. You want us to get married, don't you?"

"Yes," I said, sudden longing surging through my heart.

"Can we afford to? No. So come on down. Anyway, I already told him. Don't make me into a . . . a liar," begged Mary. "If he likes your invention, maybe he'll buy it."

THE things we do for the women we love. I went there in fear and was trembling with good reason. Not knowing quite how my invention operated, it could be stolen from me, because it might not be patentable. It was more *discovery* than *invention*.

Oh, I can tell you, I went to see Mr. Eammer in a cold sweat of fear that I might be losing my hold on the strange and accidental phenomena across which I'd stumbled.

I got quite a greeting.

When I walked into his elaborate outer offices, the workers were sitting hushed in fear before their desks. From within his private offices I could hear bellowing and the sounds of things smashing.

Mary hurried over to me, her warm, brown eyes pleading. Before she could say anything, I heard Mr. Eammer say in a shout, right through the partly opened door, "Well, what have you done about it?"

A trembling voice said, "Sir, I've cut staff fifty per cent."

"Stupid!" roared Mr. Eammer's voice. "Who's talking about that? Did you ask Peterson of World Studios if he'll license us to use his new Largoscope system?"

"Y-yes." A moment of terrified silence. "He s-said your outfit could use his Largoscope on only one occasion. When they f-film your funeral."

There was a gasp, then the door opened and a perspiring,

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harried, bald-headed man lurched out. With glazed eyes, he made a beeline for the outer door.

"Let's go in," said Mary eagerly. "He'll be so glad to see you."

I looked at her incredulously, but she took my arm and dragged me inside. There Mr. Eammer sat twitching and shuddering, his head in his pudgy hands.

He looked dully at us from tiny eyes. "Everybody hates my genius," he said, waggling his head from side to side. "Everybody envies me. The wild dogs are gathering to pull down the noble elk."

As he glared at us, Mary said swiftly, "Yes, sir."

"The wounded lion," whispered Mr. Eammer dramatically, tears of self-pity coming to his eyes. "Surrounded by jackals and laughing hyenas. I am dying of my wounds." He uttered a wail. "Everybody's got a new filming system but me." He drew a deep breath. "Who the hell are you?" he demanded.

"He's . . ." began Mary.

"Wait a minute," he said. He grabbed a phone from the six on his desk. "Hey. Publicity . . . Hey, Mike. I want rumors spread about Largoscope. Top doctors say it'll ruin the eyes, make you stone blind." He paused, his face purpling. "Okay, if you can't do it, then get another job. You're fired."

He slammed the phone down. "No cooperation from anybody," he said heavily. "Surrounded by incompetents." He glared at me. "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm . . ." I began.

AT this moment, the door opened and in came a man with a sheaf of papers and a film of sweat on his forehead. "I hate to interrupt, Mr. Eammer," he said doggedly, "but I got your note on the Lolita Vaughn contract we drew up. I knew there must be some mistake, so . . ."

"Mistake, what kind of mistake?" snapped Mr. Eammer. "I want you to tear the contract up. I said we aren't going to sign after all. I got a bigger name for the picture than her."

The man winced. "Well," he said. "I . . . I was just wondering. I mean, after all, we talked her into turning down that fat part in the new Broadway show that opened last night. It's a smash hit, I read today . . ."

"Tough," shouted Mr. Eammer. "My heart bleeds. Did I know when I made that promise that I could get a big star at such a cheap price? I acted hastily, I made a mistake, so I corrected that mistake." He looked stern. "Would it be fair to the stockholders if I took Lolita under these conditions?"

"But *you* own all the stock!"

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"That's what I said, you fool!" roared Mr. Eammer. "Get out of here."

As the man fled, I stared at Mr. Eammer in horror and disgust. Never would I trust a man like this, was my thought.

He glared at me. "Who the hell are you?" he snarled. "I keep asking you and you stand there like a dummy."

"He's the scientist I told you about," said Mary. "He's a genius. He has a new invention that will make Largoscope obsolete."

"This?" said the producer with incredulity. "This beanpole is a scientist? I don't believe it." He stared morosely at me, shaking his head. "He looks like an elevator operator who can't figure out what button to push."

"I beg your pardon!" I said with indignation. "I am a graduate of M.I.T. I graduated *summa cum laude*."

"Anybody can pick up a few words of French," he sneered. "If you're such a genius, how much money have you got, hah?" As I looked at him numbly, my jaw hanging open, he tapped his chest with a sausagelike forefinger. "Now *I* am a genius, see? I'm the guy who hires *you*. Now that we got that straight, what's this nonsense about you being smart enough to figure out a new invention that will make Largoscope obsolete?"

The weary cynicism in his gross face enraged me. If ever I had an immediate yearning to crush a man, to make him say 'uncle,' to have him beg and yearn, it was at that moment and toward this insufferable moron.

WITHIN half an hour, we had driven back to my small laboratory. He peered suspiciously at the involved maze of wiring and electronic equipment. I pointed to the small unroofed cabinet on my long worktable. It was two feet deep and the four walls, which were three feet long, were studded with small tubes I'd rather not describe, since I've developed them myself and they produce a new kind of ray.

"That's my camera," I said.

"It looks more like a diathermy machine or a sweatbox for reducing," he said skeptically. "How's it operate?"

I set a few dials and went to find Susie, my white cat. "Here pussy, pussy," I said tenderly.

"The man's gone nuts," said Mr. Eammer in disgust.

"Take it easy," I snapped. "That's how I made my strange discovery. I was doing a test on the effect of a new kind of radiation on fabrics. And Susie, my cat, walked over the equipment. First she stepped on a dial, turning it accidentally to full power,

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then she wandered into the box."

"So what?"

"Watch and see," I said.

I got Susie and she complacently allowed herself to be put into the box. I placed Mary at the dials with instructions and took Mr. Eammer to the next room and pointed to a huge circle chalked on the floor. The movie magnate waited impatiently.

"Mary," I shouted. "Okay. Turn dial number one to full force."

We heard a click.

Then Mr. Eammer yelped and cowered behind me. Because in front of us, within the chalked circle, appeared a giant eight-foot-tall cat, an enormous duplicate of Susie. Susie was licking her paw with a tongue that was nearly two feet long.

"Don't be afraid," I said proudly. "It's just an image. Look." I stepped forward and ran my hand through the air where the giant figure of Susie ignored me. My hand disappeared into the image, and I felt the usual puzzling tingle, as if I were getting a shock. And Susie, from the next room, uttered a faint meow and stopped licking her paw as if she, too, felt something.

"But . . . but there's no *screen*," Eammer said. "And . . . and it looks *real*. It's got three dimensions like an actual body." He cautiously approached, his hands shaking with excitement. He tiptoed around behind the cat image. He choked, "It's like a real, living cat all around."

"You haven't seen anything yet," I said happily. "Watch this. Mary," I yelled again. "Turn dial number two very slowly."

AS we stared, the image of the three-dimensional Susie shrank from eight feet all the way down to a three-dimensional miniature cat the size of a thimble.

Mr. Eammer looked as if he might faint.

"Good-by, Largoscope," I said grimly. "This will make all 3-D and large screen systems obsolete. It will revolutionize television, too. People will sit home and see actual *figures*, three-dimensional figures of real people. There will be no screens at all. The effects of depth and solidity, as you see, are perfect . . ."

Suddenly Susie in the next room gave a yelping meow and Mary gasped. We jumped, then ran inside. Mary was wringing her hand. There was a little smoke in the room.

"My hand hit a wire," said Mary, embarrassed. "I guess I caused a short circuit or something. I'm sorry. All this smoke." She put her hands to her eyes, rubbing.

"Susie all right?" I said.

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"I guess so," she said. "She moved so fast I could hardly see . . ."

"My dear fellow." Mr. Eammer was most cordial. He put his arm around my shoulders. He was beaming at me. He was offering me a fat cigar. "What a wonderful invention. You are indeed a genius and I offer you my humblest apologies."

"I accept them," I said, pushing him away with distaste. "You may leave now, Mr. Eammer."

"Leave? Not until we've signed a contract, my friend. I want that invention."

"Mr. Eammer, that invention isn't perfected yet. I don't even know how it works. The principles are beyond me. It is something new in the world of physics and optics, and . . ."

"That's all right," he cried. "I'll give you six months. A year. More. But I want it . . ."

"No. I'm afraid I don't trust you," I said.

Far from being offended, he was delighted. He laughed as if I'd said something witty. "Of course you don't," he said. "You don't trust me and you don't like me. But just listen to my offer."

RIGHT then and there Mr. Eammer made an offer that had my head swimming. He would, first of all, deposit in an account in my name the sum of one million dollars—free of taxes. Second, he would include in the contract a stipulation that I'd get fifty per cent of all royalties. Third—and *very* important to me—in the event that the patent he would apply for in my name was refused, or if it was broken by further research, I could keep the million dollars.

"And last," said Mr. Eammer, his nostrils flaring as he closed in for the kill, "I'll make your girl friend, Mary, a big movie star."

Mary's eyes widened. She clasped her hands before her, nervously. "Me?" she whispered. "B-but I can't act."

"What's that got to do with it?" Mr. Eammer asked impatiently. "You just got to hold still when the male lead grabs you. Leave it all to him, he knows what to do."

"No," I cried, appalled. "I don't want anybody else kissing Mary."

"Neither do I," said Mary, blushing.

"You're absolutely right." Mr. Eammer uttered a deep sigh. "Such deep love, such clean emotion, it cuts my heart out, honestly. Okay, we'll give the script a scrubbing. Nobody'll put a finger on her."

"I don't think I'm interested," said Mary regretfully.

Mr. Eammer was staggered.

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He recovered immediately and said hastily, "Smart girl. What intelligence. It's no life for you."

"But, Mary," I said, kind of liking the idea of my Mary on the screen; of being sole owner of her sweetness with millions of people knowing nobody could kiss this girl but myself. "It's such a rare opportunity. Every girl wants to be a movie star. Do it!"

"Sure," cried Mr. Eammer. "Don't be a dope. How many girls get a chance like this?"

Mary whispered, her eyes shining, "Well, all right, dear, if you insist."

"You have a deal, Mr. Eammer," I said quickly.

Mary typed the contract on my portable as dictated by Mr. Eammer.

"Put in a clause," I said cautiously, remembering his ethics, "that the contract is effective only when the million is deposited in my account."

Mr. Eammer frowned. "Put in a clause for me, too," he said. "He can't draw on the million without a signed receipt from me saying he's delivered all his blueprints and technical notebooks on the invention—and a full-size camera model, big enough to hold people."

"I agree," I said. "I'll have it built and delivered immediately."

I shook Mr. Eammer's clammy hand and he departed with Mary to get the million dollars out of his secret safe-deposit boxes.

I STARED dreamily after them, mentally spending that money on all the wonderful things I'd always wanted. A scintillometer. A centrifuge. Maybe I could even build my own private cyclotron. And I could visualize Mary cooking dinner in a little white cottage with a picket fence.

Within the week, I had delivered the full-size camera to Mr. Eammer's studio. As he left me, whimpering with joy and carefully locking the iron doors of the room he'd set aside for my equipment, I stared at the signed receipt in my hand. A million dollars. I was rich.

At this moment, Mary appeared at the studio gate and ran toward me, her face deathly pale.

"What's the matter?" I cried.

"Remember how we couldn't find Susie all week?" she gasped. "Well, I just found her."

Mary held out her fist, opened her fingers and I recoiled in astonishment. In her palm was Susie, my cat. But a Susie that was one inch long . . . the smallest, tiniest cat I'd ever seen. She was alive and seemed healthy as she licked her white fur and uttered a meow I barely could hear.

My throat was so dry I could

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hardly get the words out. "Good Lord. The invention. Something went wrong. It not only sends the *image* in three dimensions without a screen to receive it; it also transmits the *actual body itself* through space. *I've created a matter transmitter.*"

"But . . . but why is Susie so small?" wailed Mary.

"Apparently it transmits whatever size the image is set at. Remember we had reduced the image of Susie and at that time you short-circuited the wires? That short circuit is what did it. If Susie's image had been large at that moment, we would have had an eight-foot-tall cat on our hands . . ."

I paused appalled, my eyes clinging to the incredible one-inch cat now peering over the edge of Mary's hand at the ground below. It shrank back fearfully.

"My God," I whispered. I turned and, with Mary close behind me, made a beeline for Mr. Eammer.

WE finally found him and got him alone. Mary opened her palm and, without a word, showed him Susie. Mr. Eammer's eyes bulged and his jowls turned ashen. Susie scratched her ear with her miniature rear left foot and I idly wondered just how small Susie's fleas were.

"I warned you," I said grimly, "that I didn't know how this thing worked or the principles behind it. This is what's liable to happen whenever there is a short circuit in the camera box. I don't know *why* it happens, but it's too dangerous to use. If you want to call off our deal . . ."

"No, no, no," said Mr. Eammer rapidly. A cunning look came over his face. "I'm sure you can work the bugs out of it, can't you? I'm sure you're anxious to do more research on it?"

"Indeed, I am," I said warmly. "You are a man with the true scientific spirit."

"Go right to work," he said urgently, his fascinated eyes never leaving Susie. "Work night and day, day and night. I'll never leave your side. We must learn how this gadget works."

That's what we did. Making Susie comfortable in a matchbox, we set to work in the dead of night when no inquisitive eyes might see our strange experiments.

Mary made us pots of steaming coffee and Mr. Eammer paced helpfully back and forth uttering unclear mumbles, as I toiled the long, wearying hours.

It did not take long for me to gain an empirical understanding of what I had, by which I mean that, like electricity in its early days, the mysterious force

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could be utilized, made to perform, without complete understanding of its basic nature.

The night came when I had full control of the machine. We stood staring at it in awe. We had made Susie her normal size again. We had enlarged the image of an old shoe, recklessly aimed the projector out toward the country and flicked the short circuit switch that sent it out in space as solid matter.

After three breathless days, we read the puzzled report in the newspapers. A shoe eight feet long and three feet high had been found in the backyard of a summer cottage. It was a three-day wonder, until somebody advanced the theory that it was obviously a prop of some kind of musical comedy movie.

I LOOKED at my machine with the sense of having created one of the greatest wonders of science. My voice was trembling with pride as I said to Mary and Mr. Eammer, "The things that can be done with this invention. The incredible things . . ."

"Yes," said Mr. Eammer, gloating. "And it's mine, all mine."

"You'll be the biggest man in the movie industry," I said solemnly. "You made a good investment."

Mr. Eammer gave me a strange smile. "You are a great inventor, my boy, but you have a small imagination. *Biggest* man in Hollywood, did you say? The *only* man in Hollywood, you mean. Why, do you realize what I can do with this machine? I can own Hollywood, Television, Broadway. And I'll make a list of people I don't like that I'll get even with. Why, I can be Master of the Entertainment World . . ."

The blinding realization of what I had done flared in my numbed brain. I had given a tremendous scientific weapon to a ruthless moron. And there was nothing I could do, because he had my blueprints locked in his safe . . .

I stepped forward and with full force hit Mr. Eammer on the jaw.

As he sagged, I grabbed him and shoved him into the transmitter. "Look out," cried Mary. "He's getting up."

"No," he said in a strangled voice as he struggled to his knees. "No. I'll . . . *I'll fix you* . . ."

I turned the dials full power, hit the directional switch with my open palm and closed my eyes.

Mr. Eammer's voice cut off abruptly. When I opened my eyes, he was gone.

"Thank heaven," gasped Mary in relief.

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I IMMEDIATELY made computations and my figures showed that Mr. Eammer must have been transported to the Himalayas.

That's the area where the Abominable Snowman had been sighted. That is why I must speak now, regardless of any opinions about the state of my sanity. I would not want Mr. Eammer shot by mistake, as he comes rushing toward a party of explorers.

It's all right to bring him back now. I've smashed the machine beyond repair and, since Mary was Mr. Eammer's private secretary, she knew where to get the combination of his safe, so we were able to destroy my blueprints and technical notebooks.

I've turned the million dollars over to Mr. Eammer's lawyers and they are now fighting off the creditors, who all think Mr. Eammer is deliberately hiding from them.

Whatever you do, please don't take a shot at the Abominable Snowman.

It is Mr. Eammer.

—ROBERT ZACKS

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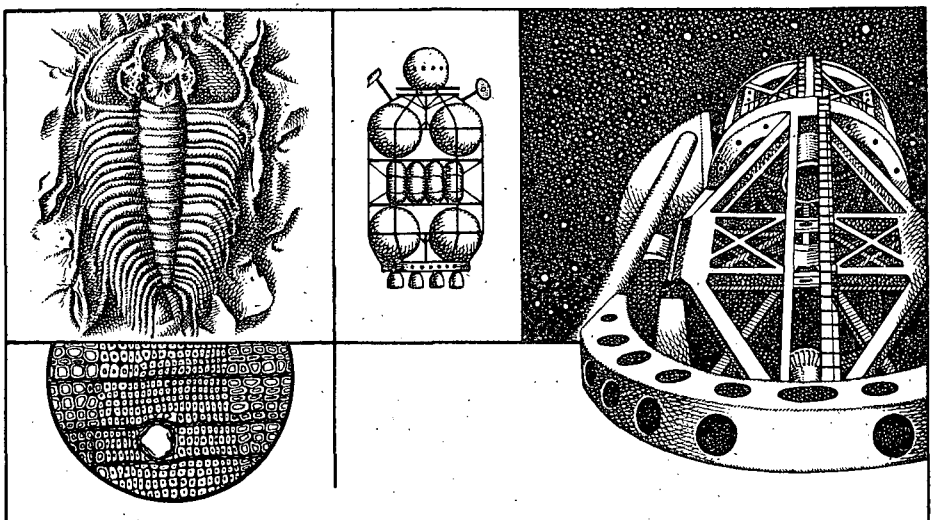

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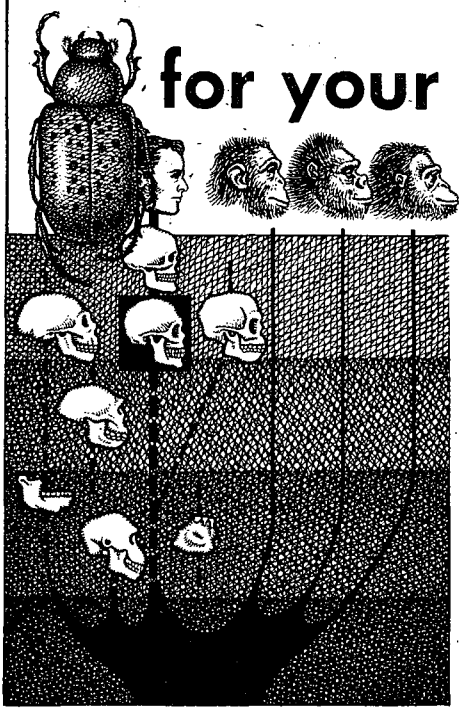

DEATH OF THE SUN (II)

CONTEMPLATING the activities of and on the Sun must have been very frustrating to 19th century astronomers. It was well known that everything on Earth, from major weather events to the growing of a blade of grass, depended on light and heat from the Sun. It was also known that the planet Earth intercepted only a tiny portion of the light and heat generated.

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Since the astronomers of the 19th century knew that everything on Earth depended on the Sun, the question of how the Sun kept going—and whether it might one day fail—was not merely a point of scientific curiosity; it acquired a very personal aspect. If you read through a pile of old astronomy books, you can easily see how frustrating the whole thing was.

THERE was, as explained last month, the so-called meteoritic theory. If meteorites amounting to one Earth mass per century fell into the Sun, their impact energy ought to be enough to account for the energy generation. One Earth mass per century, on the other hand, was so little in comparison with the enormous bulk of the Sun that the increase in diameter would be virtually negligible. It would take centuries to detect it even after you knew what you were looking for.

But unfortunately you could not expect all the meteorites to fall into the Sun in a straight-line fall. They would approach the Sun in a tight spiral, which meant that if the total of one Earth mass per century was to fall into the Sun, several Earth masses should move around it close to its surface. And that would be enough to be easily visible, perhaps even to the naked eye. Hence meteorite impact could supply only a very small amount of the total energy generation; it could only be incidental to the main process.

Then there was Helmholtz's contraction theory. You did not have to have meteorites fall into the Sun; you could get the same result by having particles from the outer layers drop down to lower layers. The overall result of this would be a gradual contraction of the Sun, but Helmholtz had shown that this, too, would be so little that it would take centuries to measure it.

One drawback was that there had to be an end to the process; it meant that the Sun would finish its career as a star some eight to ten million years in the future. That did not constitute disproof in itself, of course. If the Sun was to cease shining eight or ten million years in the future, this was simply an inevitable fact and, in spite of all its inevitability, it wasn't something to worry about: measured by human standards, eight million years is a very long time.

The real drawback was at the other hand of the time scale. Calculating backward by the same method, you could tell when the Sun had started shining—and that was far too short a time. The Earth (even before radioactivity measurements were discov-

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ered) must be older than that and a number of courageous zoologists and paleontologists stated boldly that life on Earth should be older.

Having disproved one of the two possible explanations themselves, and seeing the other disputed by the geologists, astronomers had no way to turn.

One of them wrote in desperation: "If we could only tell how much of the Sun is liquid, how much is solid and how much is gaseous, we might be able to find an answer!" We now know that nothing could be solid or even liquid on an 864,000-mile sphere with a surface temperature of 6000° centigrade and a core temperature of 20 million degrees centigrade, but at that time the statement was perfectly logical.

Another astronomer more courageously summed up that the energy generation of the Sun was either due to a combination of contraction and meteorites, "or else to a process of which we have no idea or concept at the present time."

OF course, that was the truth. At the moment those lines were written, the atom was still believed to live up to its name (Greek *atomos* means "indivisible") and no one thought that there might be energy in the atoms, even if they should turn out not to be indivisible. Science was more or less stuck with Helmholtz's contraction theory of 1854, when one could easily make the assumption that in the past, meteorite falls had supplied much more energy than they do now, so that a longer period of sunshine became available for the past, at a time when there were no astronomical observers.

That the atom was not strictly indivisible and that energy was released by this very fact became known during the decade from 1896-1906. Some ten years after that, Sir Arthur Eddington began his theoretical work on stellar interiors. At almost every point of his thinking, lack of knowledge of atomic behavior interfered and he finally exclaimed that he had intended to delve into the interior of the stars and ended up in the interior of the atom. But this apparently irrelevant detour actually cleared up the question.

We must keep in mind at this point that up to the year 1919, it was believed that radioactivity could not be influenced in any way. It had been found in the laboratory that certain heavy elements — uranium, polonium, thorium and radium — did "decay" into something else, releasing energy in the process. But the decay rate seemed to be given and fixed. It remained the same

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in the coldest cold chamber that could be produced. It did not change with heat. It remained uninfluenced by electric currents or magnetic fields.

In 1919, Ernest Rutherford succeeded in smashing a nitrogen atom. This opened entirely new vistas. One had not been able to influence radioactivity by heat or by electric currents. Maybe it merely had not been hot enough or the current had not been powerful enough.

Ten years after Rutherford, two young scientists, Robert Atkinson and Fritz Houtermans, dared to say for the first time that the nucleus of an atom might be attacked if it was hot enough. As is now known, the kinetic energy of a bit of matter increases with heat. The hotter it is, the faster it will move and the energy, naturally, depends on the speed.

When Atkinson and Houtermans made their statement, it was a comparatively recent item of knowledge that under conditions of extreme heat, something else will happen to atoms. Normally, which in this case means any temperature from room temperature to that of molten steel and beyond, each atomic nucleus is surrounded by its swirl of electrons.

Simplifying things a bit, it was assumed that these electrons had a kind of cushioning effect. If, at "normal" temperatures, one atom bumped into another, they bounced off their electron shells, the nuclei remaining unaffected. But as the temperature went up, the electrons were gradually "stripped" from the nucleus; at very high temperatures, the nucleus of the atoms would be bare. At the same time, the speed with which they moved was increased by the temperature, too. Then, in a stellar interior, you had "naked nuclei" racing about at colossal speeds.

Under these conditions, it seemed possible—even probable—that the nuclei might be affected by collisions. But that was as far as one could go in 1929—the general statement that "thermonuclear reactions" *should* be possible was all that could be said. One could not yet be specific.

IF you read popular articles on atomic energy nowadays, you can easily get the impression that it all began with the accidental discovery of the fission of uranium by Hahn and Strassman. And that, after this discovery had been verified and the fission bomb had been built and used, scientists began to wonder about the fusion of light atoms and finally contrived the hydrogen bomb.

Now this may be a nice and simple scheme for explaining

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things to an outsider, but it is not correct historically. Even before it was known that heavy elements like uranium could go into fission, scientists were talking about generating atomic energy by fusion. Not that they talked about doing it themselves; they talked about it as something that probably went on inside the stars.

One likely reaction seemed to be the fusion of a lithium nucleus and a hydrogen nucleus into a helium nucleus. But that could not be what happened in our sun. It would be far too fast under the circumstances actually prevailing. It would result in one big flash and that couldn't be it. As George Gamow wrote then, "We know, therefore, that our sun cannot contain any appreciable amount of lithium in its interior, just as we know that a slowly burning barrel surely cannot contain any gunpowder."

What really keeps the Sun going was figured out for the first time under somewhat unusual circumstances. In 1938, a Conference on Theoretical Physics took place in Washington, D. C., and one of the participants was Dr. Hans Bethe of Cornell. As he was riding home on the train, he decided that one should be able to find the proper reaction by checking through a number of possibilities. It seemed likely that the energy output of different nuclear reactions should differ greatly in magnitude so that, if one could find a nuclear reaction which tallied with the actual energy release of the Sun, one could be fairly sure of having the right one.

Professor Bethe started checking through a number of likely nuclear reactions. Before his train pulled in, he found one which gave the right result!

Strangely enough, Dr. Bethe's colleague, Karl von Weizsäcker in Germany, arrived at the same result (I don't know under what external circumstances) at the same time. The cycle of reactions is usually called the "Solar Phoenix Reaction" because the carbon atom which is involved reappears unchanged at the end, so that it acts more like a nuclear catalyst.

Naturally, in such a self-consuming cauldron as the Sun, with the enormous size and the temperatures involved, more than one nuclear reaction will go on. A little over 10 per cent of the total energy generation is thought to be due to what has been called Critchfield's H-H process which assumed a head-on collision of two protons (hydrogen nuclei) with subsequent ejection of a positron. A third reaction that probably happens is this one.

As has been intimated, the

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(TABLE 1)

THE SOLAR PHOENIX REACTION

Step No.	*Reaction*	*Time Constant for Center of Sun*
(1)	$_1H^1 + {}_6C^{12} \rightarrow {}_7N^{13}$	40,000 years
(2)	$_7N^{13} \rightarrow {}_6C^{13} +$ positron	10 minutes
(3)	$_6C^{13} + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_7N^{14}$	7,000 years
(4)	$_7N^{14} + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_8O^{15}$	1 million years
(5)	$_8O^{15} \rightarrow {}_7N^{15} +$ positron	2 minutes
(6)	$_7N^{15} + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_6C^{12} + {}_2He^4$	20 years

Net result: $4\ {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_2He^4 + 2$ positrons

various thermonuclear reactions depend on temperature. Obviously they cannot be the same for every star; some stars are hotter than our sun and some are cooler. In a star like Sirius—hotter but otherwise of the same general type—there can be very little of the H-H process, while this process might be the sole or at least main energy source in a fainter star.

Knowing now that thermonuclear reactions — fusions of light atoms — provide the energy of the stars and knowing, too, at what temperature the various reactions can take place, we can search an entirely new picture of stellar evolution.

You remember what they thought of stellar evolution before atomic energy was known. In the beginning, they put an uncondensed star—the term now in use for this is "proto-star"—which by way of contraction was finally hot enough to shine with visible light. As contraction progressed, the star went through a

(TABLE II)

POSSIBLY "COMPETING" REACTION

Step No.	*Reaction*	*Time Constant for Center of Sun*
(1)	$_1H^1 + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_1H^2 +$ positron	10^{11} years
(2)	$_1H^2 + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow {}_2He^3$	2 seconds
(3)	$_2He^3 + {}_2He^4 \rightarrow {}_4Be^7$	30 million years
(4)	$_4Be^7 +$ electron $\rightarrow {}_3Li^7$	1 year
(5)	$_3Li^7 + {}_1H^1 \rightarrow 2\ {}_2He^4$	1 minute

Net result: $4\ {}_1H^1 +$ 1 electron $\rightarrow {}_2He^4 +$ 1 positron

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white phase (Sirius as an example) then through a yellow phase (our sun as an example) and finally, when most of the energy had been radiated away but contraction was virtually finished, the red phase. The black and invisible phase was to be the end.

The modern concept still begins with the proto-star, a fantastically tenuous accumulation of gas molecules with some cosmic dust mixed in; that dust later evaporates into gases when the temperature rises. And early in the career of a star, old Helmholtz's contraction theory actually applies to the full.

The heat generated is produced by contraction and, as the process goes on, the star grows hotter, producing more heat by contraction than is radiated away from its steadily shrinking surface. Therefore the temperature in the core approaches a point, after a while, where thermonuclear reactions will start. At that time the star is still enormous as far as volume occupied is concerned, but is still very tenuous and not very luminous. It is a so-called Red Giant.

TAKING a specific Red Giant, epsilon Aurigae, it can be demonstrated that the temperature of its core is not yet high enough to keep a reaction of the type of the Solar Phoenix cycle going. The reaction must be between deuterium and hydrogen (or heavy hydrogen and ordinary hydrogen), resulting in helium and energy.

It is an interesting point that the star's mass acts as a kind of safety valve. Supposing the nuclear reaction was too violent, the heat produced would simply expand the whole star. That way, the radiating surface increases and, in an extreme case, the core may simply grow too cool to sustain the nuclear reaction. Then the star would rely on contraction until the core grows hot enough again.

Astronomers know a number of stars which bear the designation of "pulsating stars." They expand and shrink at regular intervals. It is thought—but, as far as I know, not yet completely proved — that these pulsating stars are forever on the borderline between Helmholtz's contraction and thermonuclear energy generation.

Every time they have contracted enough to heat their interior to nuclear activity, the nuclear activity grows violent enough to expand the whole star and quench the nuclear fire. Just what conditions are necessary to put a star into this dilemma is not yet known. Obviously the majority of the stars somehow escaped this

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difficulty and went on to higher core temperatures. Some known Red Giants must rely on the lithium-hydrogen reaction mentioned earlier. Still hotter ones rely on a reaction converting boron and hydrogen into helium.

You must have noticed that these thermonuclear reactions which keep the stars going always end up with helium. Since the reactions must start at the very core, where it is hottest, one can assume that helium will accumulate at the core, finally to the virtual exclusion of all other atoms. Logically then, as a star grows older, the reaction no longer takes place at the precise core. That is taken up by the atomic slag heap of helium atoms.

We have to picture, in that case, a core of no longer reacting helium, of uniform and very high temperature. The "surface" of this central helium sphere is where the thermonuclear reactions take place. The area above the reacting spherical shell is still too cool to let reactions take place. As this reacting sphere grows, the rate of conversion of other elements into helium grows, too. Hence as a star uses up its fuel faster, the less is left of it.

Percentagewise, Sirius "burns up" more hydrogen atoms than the Sun every second. It is, from this point of view, an "older star" while our sun is still so young that its end lies not several million but several billion years in the future.

AT some time near the end of the star's life, something happens. Possibly the generating shell comes so close to the surface that all the nuclear fuel above it is consumed in a flash. After that, the star collapses to form one of the super-dense White Dwarfs. Since a White Dwarf has absolutely no method of energy generation left—it has used up all the elements which could be nucuear fuel and cannot contract any more—it must be considered "dead."

As a side-issue, I would like to mention a recent idea about the Blue-white Giants. Fred Hoyle in England has made much of the idea of stars passing through clouds of cosmic dust and acquiring large amounts of matter by "tunneling" through such a dust cloud, a variation of the old meteoric impact theory. Such an event must be rare, but astrophysicists feel that the rare Blue-white Giants fit this assumption. They are, then, not stars in a certain (and somewhat mysterious) state of stellar evolution, but "rejuvenated stars" which might have held any place in stellar evolution before they entered a cloud.

How about the "black stars,"

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though, which were so much discussed a century ago? The overwhelming probability is that there aren't any. As long as there is *any* method of energy generation left, the star will utilize it. And when it has finally reached the ultimate stage of the White Dwarf, it combines an enormous heat content with a very small radiating surface, since a collapsed star probably has about the same diameter as the Earth.

Figuring things very carefully, a White Dwarf should need some 8,000 million years to radiate away its energy and turn dark.

But the Universe is probably only half as old as that figure—so that even the very first White Dwarf ever to form must still be luminous!

The question "When will the Sun die?" is, in terms of that fact, just about as academic as any could be. If it's keeping you up nights, you have about 4,000 million years — minimum! — to stay awake worrying, so let's put out the light and go to sleep, shall we?

ANY QUESTIONS?

Just what does "terminal velocity" mean? I had always thought that a body falls faster and faster the longer it falls. But from something I've just read, it seems that this is not always true. What is the answer?

Eva Sidera
7221 Sunset Boulevard
Hollywood, Calif.

Looking at falling bodies from the point of view of a man (or woman) on the ground, it is almost never true that they fall the faster the longer they fall. The reason is air resistance. Let's take a specific example. An airplane sheds a wingtip fuel tank at a height of three miles. According to one of the so-called Galilean equations, the tank's impact velocity on the ground will be $v = gt$, which simply means that at the end of every elapsed second, it falls 32 feet per sec. faster than at the beginning of the same second.

If the empty fuel tank had been jettisoned by a rocket three miles above the Moon, the formula would actually hold true. Of course you'd have to use the "g" that applies to the Moon, not the one that applies to the Earth.

But on Earth, we have air resistance. As the tank begins to fall faster and faster, air resistance grows stronger and stronger. The important factor is that air resistance grows much faster. Soon, therefore, the point is reached where air resistance prevents any additional increase in falling speed.

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From then on, the body will fall with a virtually uniform velocity, which is the "terminal velocity." For a fall from a very great height, like a long-range missile falling out of the stratosphere, terminal velocity will never be established; the impact will take place before a balance could be achieved.

As for figures: the terminal velocity of such an empty wing-tip tank might be around 100 mph. If the tank were jettisoned full, with all the fuel in it, the terminal velocity would be somewhere around 300 mph and that of a bomb, with thick steel casing and packed with high-explosive, around 900 mph. It is for this reason that there have been bombs with a rocket charge to push them downward faster. On the other hand, if you wish to decrease terminal velocity, just add something with lots of air-resistance—a parachute, for instance.

In many stories—in fact, almost all of them—while the rocket is under power, there is an increased gravity. I know that while rising from some gravitational source, such as a planet, gravity and weight would seem to increase. Beyond a certain distance from a gravity source, gravity is said to be almost nil. In the books, while the rocket is in free fall, there is no weight. Okay. But when the rocket is moving, there is weight. And as soon as the power cuts out, there is no weight, even though the rocket maintains the same velocity.

Will you please explain why such artificial weight occurs under power? I would very much like to know.

Buddie Akers
(no address given)

I have answered a very similar question once before, but a repeat might do some good, for I know that many people are confused on these points. The confusion, it appears to me, is based on two misunderstandings. Misunderstanding No. One is that the nearness of a large and heavy body (a "gravitational source," to paraphrase Mr. Akers) must produce "weight" no matter what the circumstances. Misunderstanding No. Two is apparently that *only* a "gravitational source" can produce "weight." In reality, things are quite different.

A gravitational field will influence the movement of a nearby body, deflect it from its course or make it fall. But it will not produce the feeling of "weight." That sensation is caused by resisting the pull of the gravitational field.

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As I am sitting here typing, I am supported by my chair, the chair is supported by the floor and the floor by the house and ultimately by the ground. This support prevents me from following the gravitational pull and this fact causes the sensation of weight. If I could fall freely into a deep well under my chair, I might come to a bad end, but I would *not* feel weight while the falling lasts.

The increase of weight in a rising rocket is due to two factors: as long as it stands on the ground, things are the same as if it were a house. When it begins to rise, the acceleration even goes the other way. The pull of the Earth is not just passively resisted but overcome by brute force into faster and faster movement against the pull of gravity.

This brings us to Misunderstanding No. Two. If a body like a spaceship is freely floating in space, leisurely following some weak gravitational pull from somewhere, there is "zero g" in the cabin—complete absence of weight, no resistance to movement. But when the rocket motors start up, accelerating the ship, they enforce a new movement. The force applied meets with resistance (the inertia of the things inside the ship and also that of the ship itself) and hence weight appears.

When the rocket motors are shut off again, the ship will move with a different course, but then nothing will counteract the gravitational forces which may be playing on the ship and nothing will disturb inertia—again no weight.

Another point that enters here is that our body has no organ for detecting its own velocity. It cannot "feel" velocity; it can only note changes in velocity, acceleration or deceleration.

In short, the feeling of weight can be caused either by accelerating where inertia resists the change, or else by resisting the pull of a gravitational field.

What would a man's weight be at the exact center of the Earth? According to one formula, the answer should be infinity; however, since the forces are theoretically equal on each side, the weight should be zero. What is your opinion?

Henry Oden
2317 Myrtle Street
Alexandria, La.

This is not a matter of opinion. The second answer is correct. In the precise center of the Earth (or any other planet, for that matter) equal masses

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would act from every direction on the body in the center. Since they would all cancel out, the result would obviously have to be zero. The formula you have in mind applies only to attraction from *one* direction.

I just reread your column on Mars in the July 1954 GALAXY *and wonder whether there are astronomical works specifically about that planet. I have a reading knowledge of French, in case this should help.*

Chester P. Talley
16-36, 62nd Street
Maspeth, L.I. N.Y.

A reading knowledge of French certainly helps in this case because the most recent comprehensive book on Mars happens to be in that language. Its title is *Physique de la Planète Mars*, written by Gérard de Vaucouleurs. A shorter book by the same author exists in English under the title *The Planet Mars*. Both were published in 1950.

Most recent in this country is *The Red and Green Planet* by Hubertus Strughold, M.D., Ph.D. (1954), unless a scheduled book on Mars by Dr. Robert S. Richardson has been published by the time this column appears in print. Of interest are *Observations of Mars and Its Canals* (1941) and *Observations of the Planet Mars* (1936), both by Harold B. Webb.

And in case you have a reading knowledge of German, too, I recommend for a quick survey *Mars, seine Raetsel und seine Geschichte* by Robert Henseling (1925).

What is known about the physiological effects of high acceleration? In particular, how much can the body stand momentarily and continuously?

Millard H. Perstein
1447 Willard Street
San Francisco 17, Calif.

Many acceleration tests have been carried out by means of centrifuges and it is now known that an acceleration of 3 g for ten minutes can be borne without aftereffects. (That would have been more than enough to produce escape velocity, if it had been a straight line acceleration.)

As for higher g forces: one volunteer endured 17 g for one minute without detectable harm and others have endured as much as 30 g for a number of seconds.

As regards the acceleration human beings can stand, especially when lying almost flat on their backs, it is no deterrent to space travel.

—WILLY LEY

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The Lifeboat Mutiny

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

No, sir, they do not build boats like this any longer . . . and this is the reason!

"TELL me the truth. Did you ever see sweeter engines?" Joe, the Interstellar Junkman asked. "And look at those servos!"

"Hmm," Gregor said judiciously.

"That hull," Joe said softly. "I bet it's five hundred years old, and not a spot of corrosion on it." He patted the burnished side of the boat affectionately. What luck, the pat seemed to say, that this paragon among vessels should be here just when AAA Ace needs a lifeboat.

Illustrated by KOSSIN

"She certainly does seem rather nice," Arnold said, with the studied air of a man who has fallen in love and is trying hard not to show it. "What do you think, Dick?"

Richard Gregor didn't answer. The boat *was* handsome, and she looked perfect for ocean survey work on Trident. But you had to be careful about Joe's merchandise.

"They just don't build 'em this way any more," Joe sighed. "Look at the propulsion unit. Couldn't dent it with a trip-

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hammer. Note the capacity of the cooling system. Examine—"

"It *looks* good," Gregor said slowly. The AAA Ace Interplanetary Decontamination Service had dealt with Joe in the past, and had learned caution. Not that Joe was dishonest; far from it. The flotsam he collected from anywhere in the inhabited Universe worked. But the ancient machines often had their own ideas of how a job should be done. They tended to grow peevish when forced into another routine.

"I don't care if it's beautiful, fast, durable, or even comfortable," Gregor said defiantly. "I just want to be absolutely sure it's safe."

Joe nodded. "That's the important thing, of course. Step inside."

THEY entered the cabin of the boat. Joe stepped up to the instrument panel, smiled mysteriously, and pressed a button.

Immediately Gregor heard a voice which seemed to originate in his head, saying, "I am Lifeboat 324-A. My purpose—"

"Telepathy?" Gregor interrupted.

"Direct sense recording," Joe said, smiling proudly. "No language barriers that way. I told you, they just don't build 'em this way any more."

"I am Lifeboat 324-A," the boat esped again. "My primary purpose is to preserve those within me from peril, and to maintain them in good health. At present, I am only partially activated."

"Could anything be safer?" Joe cried. "This is no senseless hunk of metal. This boat will look after you. This boat *cares*!"

Gregor was impressed, even though the idea of an emotional boat was somehow distasteful. But then, paternalistic gadgets had always irritated him.

Arnold had no such feelings. "We'll take it!"

"You won't be sorry," Joe said, in the frank and open tones that had helped make him a millionaire several times over.

Gregor hoped not.

The next day, Lifeboat 324-A was loaded aboard their spaceship and they blasted off for Trident.

This planet, in the heart of the East Star Valley, had recently been bought by a real-estate speculator. He'd found her nearly perfect for colonization. Trident was the size of Mars, but with a far better climate. There was no indigenous native population to contend with, no poisonous plants, no germ-borne diseases. And, unlike so many worlds, Trident had no predatory animals. Indeed, she had no animals at all.

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Apart from one small island and a polar cap, the entire planet was covered with water.

There was no real shortage of land; you could wade across several of Trident's seas. The land just wasn't heaped high enough.

AAA Ace had been commissioned to correct this minor flaw.

After landing on Trident's single island, they launched the boat. The rest of the day was spent checking and loading the special survey equipment on board. Early the next morning, Gregor prepared sandwiches and filled a canteen with water. They were ready to begin work.

As soon as the mooring lines were cast off, Gregor joined Arnold in the cabin. With a small flourish, Arnold pressed the first button.

"I am Lifeboat 324-A," the boat esped. "My primary purpose is to preserve those within me from peril, and to maintain them in good health. At present, I am only partially activated. For full activation, press button two."

Gregor pressed the second button.

There was a muffled buzzing deep in the bowels of the boat. Nothing else happened.

"That's odd," Gregor said. He pressed the button again. The muffled buzz was repeated.

"Sounds like a short circuit," Arnold said.

Glancing out the forward porthole, Gregor saw the shoreline of the island slowly drifting away. He felt a touch of panic. There was so much water here, and so little land. To make matters worse, nothing on the instrument panel resembled a wheel or tiller, nothing looked like a throttle or clutch. How did you operate a partially activated lifeboat?

"She must control telepathically," Gregor said hopefully. In a stern voice he said, "Go ahead slowly."

The little boat forged ahead.

"Now right a little."

The boat responded perfectly to Gregor's clear, although unnautical command. The partners exchanged smiles.

"Straighten out," Gregor said, "and full speed ahead!"

The lifeboat charged forward into the shining, empty sea.

ARNOLD disappeared into the bilge with a flashlight and a circuit tester. The surveying was easy enough for Gregor to handle alone. The machines did all the work, tracing the major faults in the ocean bottom, locating the most promising volcanoes, running the flow and buildup charts. When the survey was complete, the next stage would be turned

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over to a subbcontractor. He would wire the volcanoes, seed the faults, retreat to a safe distance and touch the whole thing off.

Then Trident would be, for a while, a spectacularly noisy place. And when things had quieted down, there would be enough dry land to satisfy even a real-estate speculator.

By mid-afternoon Gregor felt that they had done enough surveying for one day. He and Arnold ate their sandwiches and drank from the canteen. Later they took a short swim in Trident's clear green water.

"I think I've found the trouble," Arnold said. "The leads to the primary activators have been removed. And the power cable's been cut."

"Why would anyone do that?" Gregor asked.

Arnold shrugged. "Might have been part of the decommissioning. I'll have it right in a little while."

He crawled back into the bilge. Gregor turned in the direction of the island, steering telepathically and watching the green water foam merrily past the bow. At moments like this, contrary to all his previous experience, the Universe seemed a fine and friendly place.

In half an hour Arnold emerged, grease-stained but triumphant. "Try that button now," he said.

"But we're almost back."

"So what? Might as well have this thing working right."

Gregor nodded, and pushed the second button.

They could hear the faint click-click of circuits opening. Half a dozen small engines purred into life. A light flashed red, then winked off as the generators took up the load.

"That's more like it," Arnold said.

"I AM Lifeboat 324-A," the boat stated telepathically. "I am now fully activated, and able to protect my occupants from danger. Have faith in me. My action-response tapes, both psychological and physical, have been prepared by the best scientific minds in all Drome."

"Gives you quite a feeling of confidence, doesn't it?" Arnold said.

"I suppose so," Gregor said. "But where is Drome?"

"Gentlemen," the lifeboat continued, "try to think of me, not as an unfeeling mechanism, but as your friend and comrade-in-arms. I understand how you feel. You have seen your ship go down, cruelly riddled by the implacable H'gen. You have—"

"What ship?" Gregor asked. "What's it talking about?"

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"—crawled aboard me, dazed, gasping from the poisonous fumes of water; half-dead—"

"You mean that swim we took?" Arnold asked. "You've got it all wrong. We were just surveying—"

"—shocked, wounded, morale low," the lifeboat finished. "You are a little frightened, perhaps," it said in a softer mental tone. "And well you might be, separated from the Drome fleet and adrift upon an inclement alien planet. A little fear is nothing to be ashamed of, gentlemen. But this is war, and war is a cruel business. We have no alternative but to drive the barbaric H'gen back across space."

"There must be a reasonable explanation for all this," Gregor said. "Probably an old television script got mixed up in its response bank."

"We'd better give it a complete overhaul," Arnold said. "Can't listen to that stuff all day."

They were approaching the island. The lifeboat was still babbling about home and hearth, evasive action, tactical maneuvers, and the need for calm in emergencies like this. Suddenly it slowed.

"What's the matter?" Gregor asked.

"I am scanning the island," the lifeboat answered.

GREGOR and Arnold glanced at each other. "Better humor it," Arnold whispered. To the lifeboat he said, "That island's okay. We checked it personally."

"Perhaps you did," the lifeboat answered. "But in modern, lightning-quick warfare, Drome senses cannot be trusted. They are too limited, too prone to interpret what they wish. Electronic senses, on the other hand, are emotionless, eternally vigilant, and infallible within their limits."

"But there isn't anything there!" Gregor shouted.

"I perceive a foreign spaceship," the lifeboat answered. "It has no Drome markings."

"It hasn't any enemy markings, either," Arnold answered confidently, since he had painted the ancient hull himself.

"No, it hasn't. But in war, we must assume that what is not ours is the enemy's. I understand your desire to set foot on land again. But I take into account factors that a Drome, motivated by his emotions, would overlook. Consider the apparent emptiness of this strategic bit of land; the unmarked spaceship put temptingly out for bait; the fact that our fleet is no longer in this vicinity; the—"

"All right, that's enough," Gregor was sick of arguing with a verbose and egoistic machine.

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"Go directly to that island. That's an order."

"I cannot obey that order," the boat said. "You are unbalanced from your harrowing escape from death—"

Arnold reached for the cutout switch, and withdrew his hand with a howl of pain.

"Come to your senses, gentlemen," the boat said sternly. "Only the decommissioning officer is empowered to turn me off. For your own safety, I must warn you not to touch any of my controls. You are mentally unbalanced. Later, when our position is safer, I will administer to you. Now my full energies must be devoted toward detection and escape from the enemy."

The boat picked up speed and moved away from the island in an intricate evasive pattern.

"Where are we going?" Gregor asked.

"To rejoin the Drome fleet!" the lifeboat cried so confidently that the partners stared nervously over the vast, deserted waters of Trident.

"As soon as I can find it, that is," the lifeboat amended.

IT was late at night. Gregor and Arnold sat in a corner of the cabin, hungrily sharing their last sandwich. The lifeboat was still rushing madly over the waves, its every electronic sense alert, searching for a fleet that had existed five hundred years ago, upon an entirely different planet.

"Did you ever hear of these Dromes?" Gregor asked.

Arnold searched through his vast store of minutiae. "They were non-human, lizard-evolved creatures," he said. "Lived on the sixth planet of some little system near Capella. The race died out over a century ago."

"And the H'gen?"

"Also lizards. Same story." Arnold found a crumb and popped it into his mouth. "It wasn't a very important war. All the combatants are gone. Except this lifeboat, apparently."

"And us," Gregor reminded him. "We've been drafted as Drome soldiery." He sighed wearily. "Do you think we can reason with this tub?"

Arnold shook his head. "I don't see how. As far as this boat is concerned, the war is still on. It can only interpret data in terms of that premise."

"It's probably listening in on us now," Gregor said.

"I don't think so. It's not really a mind-reader. Its perception centers are geared only to thoughts aimed specifically at it."

"Yes siree," Gregor said bitterly, "they just don't build 'em this way any more." He wished he could get his hands on Joe, the Interstellar Junkman.

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"It's actually a very interesting situation," Arnold said. "I may do an article on it for *Popular Cybernetics*. Here is a machine with nearly infallible apparatus for the perception of external stimuli. The percepts it receives are translated logically into action. The only trouble is, the logic is based upon no longer existent conditions. Therefore, you could say that the machine is the victim of a systematized delusional system."

Gregor yawned. "You mean the lifeboat is just plain nuts," he said bluntly.

"Nutty as a fruitcake. I believe paranoia would be the proper designation. But it'll end pretty soon."

"Why?" Gregor asked.

"It's obvious," Arnold said. "The boat's prime directive is to keep us alive. So he has to feed us. Our sandwiches are gone, and the only other food is on the island. I figure he'll have to take a chance and go back."

IN a few moments they could feel the lifeboat swinging, changing direction. It esped, "At present I am unable to locate the Drome fleet. Therefore, I am turning back to scan the island once again. Fortunately, there are no enemy in this immediate area. Now I can devote myself to your care with all the power of my full attention."

"You see?" Arnold said, nudging Gregor. "Just as I said. Now we'll reinforce the concept." He said to the lifeboat, "About time you got around to us. We're hungry."

"Yeah, feed us," Gregor demanded.

"Of course," the lifeboat said. A tray slid out of the wall. It was heaped high with something that looked like clay, but smelled like machine oil.

"What's that supposed to be?" Gregor asked.

"That is geezel," the lifeboat said. "It is the staple diet of the Drome peoples. I can prepare it in sixteen different ways."

Gregor cautiously sampled it. It tasted just like clay coated with machine oil.

"We can't eat that!" he objected.

"Of course you can," the boat said soothingly. "An adult Drome consumes five point three pounds of geezel a day, and cries for more."

The tray slid toward them. They backed away from it.

"Now listen," Arnold told the boat. "We are *not* Dromes. We're humans, an entirely different species. The war you think you're fighting ended five hundred years ago. We can't eat geezel. Our food is on that island."

"Try to grasp the situation.

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Your delusion is a common one among fighting men. It is an escape fantasy, a retreat from an intolerable situation. Gentlemen, I beg you, face reality!"

"*You* face reality!" Gregor screamed. "Or I'll have you dismantled bolt by bolt."

"Threats do not disturb me," the lifeboat esped serenely. "I know what you've been through. Possibly you have suffered some brain damage from your exposure to poisonous water."

"Poison?" Gregor gulped.

"By Drome standards," Arnold reminded him.

"If absolutely necessary," the lifeboat continued, "I am also equipped to perform physical brain therapy. It is a drastic measure, but there can be no coddling in time of war." A panel slid open, and the partners glimpsed shining surgical edges.

"We're feeling better already," Gregor said hastily. "Fine looking batch of geezel, eh, Arnold?"

"Delicious," Arnold said, wincing.

"I won a nationwide contest in geezel preparation," the lifeboat esped, with pardonable pride. "Nothing is too good for our boys in uniform. Do try a little."

Gregor lifted a handful, smacked his lips, and set it down on the floor. "Wonderful," he said, hoping that the boat's internal scanners weren't as efficient as the external ones seemed to be.

Apparently they were not. "Good," the lifeboat said. "I am moving toward the island now. And, I promise you, in a little while you will be more comfortable."

"Why?" Arnold asked.

"The temperature here is unbearably hot. It's amazing that you haven't gone into coma. Any other Drome would have. Try to bear it a little longer. Soon, I'll have it down to the Drome norm of twenty degrees below zero. And now, to assist your morale, I will play our national Anthem."

A hideous rhythmic screeching filled the air. Waves slapped against the sides of the hurrying lifeboat. In a few moments, the air was perceptibly cooler.

GREGOR closed his eyes wearily, trying to ignore the chill that was spreading through his limbs. He was becoming sleepy. Just his luck, he thought, to be frozen to death inside an insane lifeboat. It was what came of buying paternalistic gadgets, high-strung, humanistic calculators, over-sensitive, emotional machines.

Dreamily he wondered where it was all leading to. He pictured a gigantic machine hospital. Two robot doctors were wheeling a lawnmower down a long white corridor. The Chief Robot Doc-

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tor was saying, "What's wrong with this lad?" And the assistant answered, "Completely out of his mind. Thinks he's a helicopter." "Aha!" the Chief said knowingly. "Flying fantasies! Pity. Nice looking chap." The assistant nodded. "Overwork did it. Broke his heart on crab grass." The lawnmower stirred. "Now I'm an eggbeater!" he giggled.

"Wake up," Arnold said, shaking Gregor, his teeth chattering. "We have to do something."

"Ask him to turn on the heat," Gregor said groggily.

"Not a chance. Dromes live at twenty below. We are Dromes. Twenty below for us, and no back talk."

Frost was piled deep on the coolant tubes that traversed the boat. The walls had begun to turn white, and the portholes were frosted over.

"I've got an idea," Arnold said cautiously. He glanced at the control board, then whispered quickly in Gregor's ear.

"We'll try it," Gregor said. They stood up. Gregor picked up the canteen and walked stiffly to the far side of the cabin.

"What are you doing?" the lifeboat asked sharply.

"Going to get a little exercise," Gregor said. "Drome soldiers must stay fit, you know."

"That's true," the lifeboat said dubiously.

Gregor threw the canteen to Arnold.

Arnold chuckled synthetically and threw the canteen back to Gregor.

"Be careful with that receptacle," the lifeboat warned. "It is filled with a deadly poison."

"We'll be careful," Gregor said. "We're taking it back to headquarters." He threw the canteen to Arnold.

"Headquarters may spray it on the H'gen," Arnold said, throwing the canteen back.

"Really?" the lifeboat asked. "That's interesting. A new application of—"

Suddenly Gregor swung the canteen against the coolant tube. The tube broke and liquid poured over the floor.

"Bad shot, old man," Arnold said.

"How careless of me," Gregor cried.

"I should have taken precautions against internal accidents," the lifeboat esped gloomily. "It won't happen again. But the situation is very serious. I cannot repair the tube myself. I am unable to properly cool the boat."

"If you just drop us on the island—" Arnold began.

"Impossible!" the lifeboat said. "My first duty is to preserve your lives, and you could not live long in the climate of this planet. But I am going to take

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the necessary measures to ensure your safety."

"What are you going to do?" Gregor asked, with a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"There is no time to waste. I will scan the island once more. If our Drome forces are not present, we will go to the one place on this planet that can sustain Drome life."

"What place?"

"The southern polar cap," the lifeboat said. "The climate there is almost ideal—thirty below zero, I estimate."

The engines roared. Apologetically the boat added. "And, of course, I must guard against any further internal acidents."

As the lifeboat charged forward they could hear the click of the locks, sealing their cabin.

"THINK!" Arnold said.

"I am thinking," Gregor answered. "But nothing's coming out."

"We must get off when he reaches the island. It'll be our last chance."

"You don't think we could jump overboard?" Gregor asked.

"Never. He's watching now. If you hadn't smashed the coolant tube, we'd still have a chance."

"I know," Gregor said bitterly. "You and your ideas."

"My ideas! I distinctly remember you suggesting it. You said—"

"It doesn't matter whose idea it was." Gregor thought deeply. "Look, we know his internal scanning isn't very good. When we reach the island, maybe we could cut his power cable."

"You wouldn't get within five feet of it," Arnold said, remembering the shock he had received from the instrument panel.

"Hmm." Gregor locked both hands around his head. An idea was beginning to form in the back of his mind. It was pretty tenuous, but under the circumstances . . .

"I am now scanning the island," the lifeboat announced.

Looking out the forward porthole, Gregor and Arnold could see the island, no more than a hundred yards away. The first flush of dawn was in the sky, and outlined against it was the scarred, beloved snout of their spaceship.

"Place looks fine to me," Arnold said.

"It sure does," Gregor agreed. "I'll bet our forces are dug in underground."

"They are not," the lifeboat said. "I scanned to a depth of a hundred feet."

"Well," Arnold said, "under the circumstances, I think we should examine a little more closely. I'd better go ashore and look around."

"It is deserted," the lifeboat

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said. "Believe me, my senses are infinitely more acute than yours. I cannot let you endanger your lives by going ashore. Drome needs her soldiers — especially sturdy, heat-resistant types like you."

"We like this climate," Arnold said.

"Spoken like a patriot!" the lifeboat said heartily. "I know how you must be suffering. But now I am going to the south pole, to give you veterans the rest you deserve."

GREGOR decided it was time for his plan, no matter how vague it was. "That won't be necessary," he said.

"What?"

"We are operating under special orders," Gregor said. "We weren't supposed to disclose them to any vessel below the rank of super-dreadnaught. But under the circumstances—"

"Yes, under the circumstances," Arnold chimed in eagerly, "we will tell you."

"We are a suicide squad," Grefor said.

"Especially trained for hot climate work."

"Our orders," Gregor said, "are to land and secure that island for the Drome forces."

"I didn't know that," the boat said.

"You weren't supposed to," Arnold told it. "After all, you're only a lifeboat."

"Land us at once," Gregor said. "There's no time to lose."

"You should have told me sooner," the boat said. "I couldn't guess, you know." It began to move toward the island.

Gregor could hardly breathe. It didn't seem possible that the simple trick would work. But then, why not? The lifeboat was built to accept the word of its operators as the truth. As long as the 'truth' was consistent with the boat's operational premises, it would be carried out.

The beach was only fifty yards away now, gleaming white in the cold light of dawn.

Then the boat reversed its engines and stopped. "No," it said.

"No what?"

"I cannot do it."

"What do you mean?" Arnold shouted. "This is war! Orders—"

"I know," the lifeboat said sadly. "I am sorry. A different type of vessel should have been chosen for this mission. Any other type. But not a *life*boat."

"You must," Gregor begged. "Think of our country, think of the barbaric H'gen—"

"It is physically impossible for me to carry out your orders," the lifeboat told them. "My prime directive is to protect my occupants from harm. That order is stamped on my every tape, giving

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priority over all others. I cannot let you go to your certain death."

THE boat began to move away from the island.

"You'll be court-martialed for this!" Arnold screamed hysterically. "They'll decommission you."

"I must operate within my limitations," the boat said sadly. "If we find the fleet, I will transfer you to a killerboat. But in the meantime, I must take you to the safety of the south pole."

The lifeboat picked up speed, and the island receded behind them. Arnold rushed at the controls and was thrown flat. Gregor picked up the canteen and poised it, to hurl ineffectually at the sealed hatch. He stopped himself in mid-swing, struck by a sudden wild thought.

"Please don't attempt any more destruction," the boat pleaded. "I know how you feel, but—"

It was damned risky, Gregor thought, but the south pole was certain death anyhow.

He uncapped the canteen. "Since we cannot accomplish our mission," he said, "we can never again face our comrades. Suicide is the only alternative." He took a gulp of water and handed the canteen to Arnold.

"No! Don't!" the lifeboat shrieked. "That's *water!* It's a deadly poison—"

An electrical bolt leaped from the instrument panel, knocking the canteen from Arnold's hand.

Arnold grabbed the canteen. Before the boat could knock it again from his hand, he had taken a drink.

"We die for glorious Drome!" Gregor dropped to the floor. He motioned Arnold to lie still.

"There is no known antidote," the boat moaned. "If only I could contact a hospital ship . . ." Its engines idled indecisively. "Speak to me," the boat pleaded. "Are you still alive?"

Gregor and Arnold lay perfectly still, not breathing.

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"Answer me!" the lifeboat begged. "Perhaps if you ate some geezel . . ." It thrust out two trays. The partners didn't stir.

"Dead," the lifeboat said. "*Dead.* I will read the burial service."

THERE was a pause. Then the lifeboat intoned, "Great Spirit of the Universe, take into your custody the souls of these, your servants. Although they died by their own hand, still it was in the service of their country, fighting for home and hearth. Judge them not hashly for their impious deed. Rather blame the spirit of war that inflames and destroys all Drome."

The hatch swung open. Gregor could feel a rush of cool morning air.

"And now, by the authority vested in me by the Drome Fleet, and with all reverence, I commend their bodies to the deep."

Gregor felt himself being lifted through the hatch to the deck. Then he was in the air, falling, and in another moment he was in the water, with Arnold beside him.

"Float quietly," he whispered.

The island was nearby. But the lifeboat was still hovering close to them, nervously roaring its engines.

"What do you think it's up to now?" Arnold whispered.

"I don't know," Gregor said, hoping that the Drome peoples didn't believe in converting their bodies to ashes.

The lifeboat came closer. Its bow was only a few feet away. They tensed. And then they heard it. The roaring screech of the Drome National Anthem.

In a moment it was finished. The lifeboat murmured, "Rest in peace," turned, and roared away.

As they swam slowly to the island, Gregor saw that the lifeboat was heading south, due south, to the pole, to wait for the Drome fleet.

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

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The one way to kill the idea

that murdered the world was:

make the man with the idea—

Target One

By FREDERIK POHL

PERHAPS we could have managed, some way or another to blow up Oak Ridge or the Hanford installation. Certainly we could have tried, and I suppose that with effort we should have found the way to do it. But it wouldn't have been enough. Not nearly enough: The enemy wasn't the Bomb any more, but $e = mc^2$ itself. As long as the seed was there, the fruit was bound to come.

We had to destroy the seed.

Marin was on the machine while Lee fed slugs of the fuel metal into the reactor. Marin was a capable man and so I was able to relieve the tension of the last few minutes before the trial by strolling out on the deck of the barge.

It was a beautiful day, the wind from out at sea keeping fall-out from the mainland at a minimum. Before me was the Staten Island shore, trees and

Illustrated by DICK FRANCIS

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sheer bare heights at the water's edge; to my left was the shattered stalagmitic bed of New York. Even after all the decades, there was nothing green there. The rains that had washed the isotopes from Staten Island and watered its new growth of forest had hissed into steam on the island of Manhattan. It would be many decades before grass grew in its streets.

One of the workers in the Staten Island stockpile waved to me, a quarter of a mile across the water, and I waved back. They wished us well, there on the island. All three of us had spent the previous evening ashore with them and the conversation had been loud and long.

If we could succeed!

If we could reverse the clock!

So we drank our long, bitter toasts to success, and every man, woman and child in all the world toasted our efforts with us, all hundred and fifty thousand and more of them, for we all grew up in the ruins and the tradition of greatness and we knew what success would mean.

"Jom!" Lee called from behind me. "Jom, we're ready!"

I hurried into the workdeck. Lee was standing at the door, but without a word he went back to his station at the reactor, not daring to leave it too long. His job, in some ways, was the most important of all. The reactor was tricky and dangerous and the K-mesons that powered the trial came only from a complicated fission-and-fusion reaction, hard to handle, deadly if it got out of control.

Marin was already setting up his coordinates. I looked over his shoulder at the whirling colors on the screen; it was nothing you could recognize. Not yet.

"I have the time now," Marin said absently, cracking a vernier a hair from its null position. "But the tri-di readings are hard. If we could have started out from Switzerland in the first place—"

"What Switzerland?" I asked. The slag-heap on the Alps would not be fit to move around in for centuries.

He said excitedly, "It's coming, Jom!" He froze one setting at Lausanne's elevation and dropped his hand to the range and deflection controls. Slowly the whirling began to make sense. We were watching a blur, and the blur smoothed out to become a racing mountainscape. We were flying over it, toward a city just appearing at the horizon. Marin kicked a floor switch and a translucent city map of Lausanne lighted up on the wall before him.

The screen seemed to drive across a lake, through a flicker-

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ing thicket of buildings, and jerked to a halt inside an auditorium.

Marin cried, "I can't get it clear! The view field—"

"The view field is all right, Marin!"

"But it's so dark!"

I fought back a hysterical laugh. "It's dark because the lights are out, man! Your time adjustment is a little off, that's all. Scan backward and forward."

He threw a quick, shame-faced grin at me over his shoulder and carefully fingered the fourth dial. The screen held its shadowy tableau for a moment; then the lights went on. Doll-like figures walked backward into the auditorium as the stage's curtain went up on actors taking bows. Marin was evidently scanning backward through time.

"Not too far," I cautioned him.

He nodded and delicately twisted the dial backward, then forward. A dozen times the screen lighted and each time it was a pageant, or a rehearsal, or a musical performance.

Then Marin caught his breath and instinctively I clutched his shoulder. He locked the controls and we were silent for a moment, looking at what, back in those earliest twentieth-century days, had been a Swiss ceremony of graduation.

Marin's eyes were quicker than mine. He said steadily, "In the second row, third . . . no, fourth from the right. Is that him?"

I counted off. There was no need to look back to the picture, torn from an old magazine, that we had pinned to the wall. It was a young, lean man in a curiously uncomfortable uniform and round pill-box hat. His eyes were abstracted, staring right through the audience in the hall into far reaches of remote thought. There was no pipe, no violin, no bushy white hair.

There never would be any.

IT took nearly half an hour, once we had vectored in, for Lee to bring his reactor up to full charge. Lee was absorbed over his rods and slugs. Marin hovered close by his screen, though the controls were locked and he wasn't really needed. But I had nothing to do and I stamped about the barge like an expectant father with a five-generation history of gene-damage.

When I went back into the workdeck, Marin said at once, "Jom, I can't do it!"

Lee went steadily on with his work. If he heard, he never showed it.

I said angrily, "Don't be an idiot!" Perhaps I was angriest because I was beginning to have my own doubts. We had all been brought up to hold human life as

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the most precious thing on Earth.

Marin was trembling. I cursed myself for leaving him alone so long at this point, long enough to work himself into a state.

"If we could travel in time—" he began.

"Time travel is impossible. Forget it!"

"But we can't just murder a man!"

"Why not?"

He exploded, "The greatest genius in theoretical physics who ever lived! A harmless, peaceful human being who never harmed a soul!"

I said as forcefully as I could: "Two billion dead, Marin! Three continents wiped out! And every man alive mutating. How many brothers and sisters did you have, Marin?"

He winced. "None that survived," he admitted. "But Einstein himself had nothing to do with it. The bombs were built by others."

"After he showed them the way. No, Marin! The world knew what was coming. Look through the books that survive, see how many frightening predictions there were of the horrors that would follow an atomic war. Right, weren't they? And yet, once the theory was known, there was no way of preventing the war. There are always wars, Marin, but they don't matter if they only kill off a fraction of the population. Only when they annihilate whole countries, *then* they matter!"

Lee called, as calmly as though he had been back at the University, "Ready now, Jom!"

We looked at each other for a moment and I could read the revulsion in Marin's eyes.

"Well?" I demanded.

IT had to be Marin at the controls; he had been the one who'd practiced, the one who'd designed the controls and knew how they worked. I might have found Lausanne easily enough myself, but I never could have focused the working leads of the timebinder to that tiny area inside a human skull where we could do what had to be done.

If time travel were possible—yes, Marin was right—then we could have gone to the young man, perhaps reasoned with him, perhaps bribed him, perhaps, if nothing else worked, abducted him from the past. But time travel was impossible by definition; matter cannot leave its locus in the chronon.

But the K-mesons, those half-understood, hardly material particles-that-were-waves — they were not bound by the laws that ruled crude matter. And though we could not move in time, we could direct a flow of K-mesons

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that would burn and destroy . . .

Marin's voice was harsh. "All right, Jom," he said.

I heard him at the controls, and when the whispering crackle of mesons lashed out and struck, I also heard that, but I did not watch the screen. Murder comes hard to me, too, whatever duty may force me to do. I had no stomach to watch the little figure in the screen jerk upright and slump over, no desire to see the abstracted light die out of those far-seeing eyes.

And besides, I didn't need to look at the screen to see what happened at the moment when the K-meson flow leaped out to destroy a brain. I had a window before me and I saw what happened there.

"Good Lord," cried Lee, "look at all the boats!"

That was all we could do for a moment, just look. Inside the K-meson field, we were invulnerable and untouchable.

But the world was changing around us.

Wrecked Manhattan sprang back to life. The harsh, familiar dust-cloud sky gave way to a curious blue, with white, fluffy clouds, such a sky as I had seen described in books, but had never thought to observe with my own eyes. And the harbor, the broad, slag-washed harbor of New York —which had seemed crowded when there were as many as three vessels in it at once—teemed with boats, big ones and small ones, motored vessels of all sizes and anchored barges and a floating giant, barely visible through the Narrows, that seemed the size of a city.

THE process of change was complete and the K-meson field died away.

Marin, still white-faced and trembling with the reaction, whispered, "Jom, Jom, it's a whole new world!"

And it was. A world we had never known; a world where there were millions, even billions of people, a world that had never been pressed through the grinder of nuclear war.

A stubby power launch came dodging toward us through the clutter of smaller craft and a voice bellowed at us over a loud-hailer: "You there! You in the barge with green markings! Heave to and show your registration and mooring permit!"

He meant us. It would be quite a shock to him, I reflected wryly, when he saw what passed for our "papers." Would he believe us? Would anyone in this world take our word for what we had done? Undoubtedly not. But they would learn, they would have to believe, once they had a chance to look around our workdeck. The

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wonders we could bring to them! For without Einstein, there would have been no nuclear piles; without the breeder reactors, no heavy elements in the high hundreds to decay into the power metal that fed our machine and released the K-mesons.

A smaller, faster vessel beat the launch to our side. It was a rickety, patched-up dinghy with a limping outboard motor pushing it along, but it was light and it moved. Oddly, it made no great noise. I saw the outboard motor was driven from an electric battery.

From the dinghy, an eager voice called: "Cigarettes? Candy? Where you fellows from?"

The three who crewed the dinghy were in their early teens; they wore ragged trousers and nothing else. They clamored up at us for tobacco, money, anything. Lee answered them, and perhaps I would have, too, but Marin drew me aside.

"Jom, I don't like this!" he said tensely. "I—I feel as though I'm strangling!" He was breathing hard, in fact, and I knew what he meant. There was something about all those teeming hordes of people, the hundreds of big and little boats bobbing about, the swollen buildings on Manhattan and Staten Islands—I felt oppressed, too, as though I were stifling under a mound of crawling, twitching human beings.

But I told Marin curtly to shut up and advanced to meet the delegation from the power launch.

It was an occasion for some ceremony, I thought. I said: "Welcome to our ship, friend from a world of peace and plenty."

THE man in the prow of the launch paused with one knee over the side and stared at me. Then he shook his leg toward our boarding ladder.

"Registration papers," he said. "What kind of a tub is this, anyway?"

"It's a power barge used for scientific purposes," I told him. "We come from a different world. We—"

He said impatiently, "What kind of power? Electric? Don't try to kid me, fellow; you'd never cross the Atlantic with electric power."

I shook my head. "The engines are gasoline, of course. But the—"

"*Gasoline!*" The man's look was suddenly intent. He wore a rather shabby blue uniform. I don't think he made a move, but at that exact moment I realized he had a gun in a side-holster.

"Let's see the registration papers," he repeated. "Quick!"

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"We don't have any." I was getting exasperated. "We don't come from your time at all—that is, it's the same time, but a different probability line. Don't you understand? We . . ."

There was something about his expression. I stopped suddenly and thought for a second. Then I said, "Look, I'm sorry if I'm confusing. Take my word for it, this is something important and I can't explain it to you. Can you put me in touch with a physicist?"

"A what?"

"A physicist, preferably one with a specialty in nucleonics. Or any scientist, for that matter."

He looked at me thoughtfully. "You don't have a mooring permit, do you?"

"No, of course not."

"I see." He rubbed his chin. "Wait a minute," he said, and clambered back down the side. I looked rather sternly around at my crew, fully aware that I had made a mess of our first contact with the world we had sired. But they were not acting very critical.

Marin still looked scared. Lee was at the rail on the other side of the barge; he was pitching coins into the water, and the youths from the dinghy—in fact, people from half a dozen little boats, and not all of them youths—were diving after them, with a good deal of squabbling.

The man in the blue uniform was back in a moment with another man, this one in a brown uniform, equally shabby.

"—case for the Feds, not us," Blue Uniform was saying as they approached. "Possession of gasoline, no papers, claims they come from abroad."

Brown Uniform nodded and said crisply to me, "You'll have to come with us."

Blue Uniform asked sharply, "Where?"

"New York City Hall, of course. This is a New York police launch and—"

"*And* a two-state harbor patrol, mac! Don't forget it! We'll take him to Jersey City. None of your crummy slum families are going to settle on *this* barge. We need housing space as much as you do!"

"What about the gasoline?" Brown Uniform yelled. "New York's got a sixty per cent quota drag! We're entitled to every drop that comes into the harbor until it's made up and you can take—"

Blue Uniform suddenly shrugged. "Forget it," he said in a different tone. "We could have worked something out. Well, never mind, mac. Here come the Feds, so we're both out of luck."

THE Feds were as shabbily uniformed as the others, but they wore sharp visored caps,

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and they took us neither to New York nor to New Jersey, but to the floating colossus beyond the Narrows, which turned out to be a sort of moored hulk doubling as a fort and administrative headquarters. It wasn't an unpleasant trip, except that the water was sludge-gray in color and stank as it sprayed over the wales. Since we weren't going very fast, not much sprayed, which was a blessing.

I said gratefully to the officer in charge of the boat, "Thanks for getting rid of those two. They didn't seem able to understand what I was trying to say. If you can put me in touch with some sort of scientist, I'm sure I can explain things to him. You see, we've been doing research in parachronon penetration. Very important research. It is no exaggeration to say that every man alive today owes his life to us! Do you understand? It's as if—"

He interrupted me. "How much gasoline have you got?"

It was a clear waste of time to talk to this one, so I merely sat in silence until we arrived at the floating headquarters. They had refused to allow me to leave either Lee or Marin on the barge and I was feeling nervous about what the boarding party might be doing to our reactor. When I said something to Lee, though, he reassured me.

"Not enough power in it now to hurt a kitten," he said positively. "We drained it dry on the bolt."

"Suppose they recharge the reactor?" I argued.

"With what? We stockpiled all the reserve fuel. We couldn't keep it in close proximity to the reactor, after all. No, don't worry, Jom; they might mess up the instruments a little, but there won't be any nuclear explosions, believe me. Relax. Look around and enjoy yourself. This is it, Jom, the world we've dreamed of! It isn't an atomic wreck any more. It's free, unspoiled, untainted."

I looked at him sharply, but there was no hint of mockery in his voice or his eyes. And, getting a grip on myself, I began to see that he was right. True, things were not exactly as I had always dreamed them in this new world. I hadn't quite counted on the hordes of people, certainly more even than the history books told of, or the evident shortage of resources and raw materials. But there were no ray scars on New York City in this world and if Target One had never been blasted, surely the rest of the world escaped!

I followed Lee's advice: I relaxed.

Until they did as I asked and, after irritable wrangling, put me

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in touch with a scientist whose specialty was nucleonics.

"SO!" he hissed, eyes angry through the thick glasses, the silver insignia of rank on his collar glittering and dancing as he swallowed. "So you admit you have classified material on your barge!"

I said wearily, "I tell you there's nothing classified about it."

He stared at me. "Nothing classified about an atomic *reactor*?" he demanded. Only he spaced it out, each word with an angry emphasis of its own: Nothing. Classified. About. An. Atomic. *Reactor?*

"Of course not! Not where we come from, I mean. I—"

"Enough!" he cut me off. "I mention to you two names: One is 'V. S. Kretchwood.' And the other—" he looked at me shrewdly through the glasses—"is 'Brazil.' Am I correct?"

"About what?" I asked, honestly puzzled.

"Don't try to make a fool out of me! You come from Brazil and your reactor is based on Kretchwood's First Law. Don't try to deny it!"

I swallowed my anger and tried to placate him. "I have never been in Brazil in my life. I know where it is, yes. There is —there was, that is—a large population there, more than fifteen thousand. But this Kretchwood you talk of is absolutely new to me. Our reactor is based on Einstein's equation, but I know you never heard of Einstein. That's the whole point!" And I went through the whole explanation again.

He passed his hand over his forehead. "Almost, I begin to believe you. Silly of me, I know, but—"

"No, it isn't silly! It's the absolute truth," I insisted. "I can prove it to you; just examine our workdeck. You who know nothing of atomic energy will find it hard to understand, but—"

"We do."

—"but matter and energy are the same— You *what?*"

"We do know about atomic energy," he said. "That's Kretchwood's First Law: E is greater than e-sub-n plus e-sub-o." He scribbled it on a pad of paper: $E > {}^{e}n + {}^{e}o$. "That is, the total energy of an atom is more than the aggregate energy of its nuclear and orbital particles, which means that, by transmutation, energy can be released. V. S. Kretchwood, 1903-1986, if I remember correctly."

I stared blankly. They knew about binding energy; they knew about fission and fusion; they knew . . .

"But you *shouldn't,*" I said. "I

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mean we've killed a man— No, excuse me; I'm a little upset. What you're saying is that you are aware of the military and civilian implications of atomic energy."

"There's a thorium pile going right under your feet," he said.

"Uranium 235—"

"Would be better, of course," he nodded. "The problem of separation is being worked on."

"And you propose to make a bomb along the lines of the old Manhattan District?"

"We call it Task Forty-four."

Lee and Marin and I exchanged glances. "So there will be atomic warfare, after all," I said dully. "But isn't all this top secret?"

"Of course," said the angry little man with stars on his collar.

"And yet you trust us?"

"Where you're going, it makes no difference. We have special—reserve areas, let's say, for persons in improper possession of information about atomic energy. You won't spread anything you've learned."

"But there's nothing improper about it! You said you believed us!"

He leaned forward sharply. "I do," he said in thick, hate-filled tones. "I believe it's your doing that the world didn't have an atomic war two hundred years ago. And while you're in the reserve areas, bear this in mind: *I hope you rot there*!"

SING a dirge for one hundred and fifty thousand children of atomic cataclysm. We killed a man from the past and wiped them out, all of them, with their shattered, festering planet.

And for nothing.

It isn't bad here, in the reserve area, though it is a little crowded. Ours—they call it the Mojave Resettlement Project—is the worst of the lot, because there just isn't *anything* in the way of natural resources here. The soil gets fertile enough, with the Los Angeles sludge piped in, but the only water that comes in is right along with the sludge. All the solids come out in the settling tanks and we kill the salts with ion-exchange. The smell and the taste stay right in the water, though.

But we wouldn't complain, if it were going to stay this way. We wouldn't complain about the taste of the water, or the restrictions on our freedom, or the congested state of the world. Fourteen billion people!

They say that a century or so ago, there was a big campaign for birth control, back when there were only about five billion. But anyone can second-guess that: Some segments of the population responded to the cam-

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paign and most did not. The only result of the effort was that the generations following were even less susceptible to such a campaign.

But, as I say, we wouldn't complain, if we couldn't see on the horizon the flat silhouette of Task Forty-four's new group of breeder piles. I give us about a year more, that's all.

Marin has the bunk above mine. I don't sleep much, and all through the night, I hear him tossing and turning and muttering to himself. And if I listen closely, I can hear the words that are always the same:

"Poor Dr. Einstein," he says thickly, and then goes back to sleep.

Poor Dr. Einstein!

Poor us!

—FREDERIK POHL

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By EDWARD WELLEN

Illustrated by STONE

Origins of Galactic Advice to the Lovelorn

IN 2534 U. E., all Advice to the Lovelorn counselors officially came under the departmental designation 509. In Terran legend, 509 is the modern form of DIX, a Latin date supposedly fixing the birth of Advice to the Lovelorn in a chaplain's office at a military fort in New Jersey.

In 2604, a schizoid being finding himself in a jam learned that the 509 he had sought and received advice from was himself. This sharpened the realization that a questioner generally presents only one side of a problem—the questioner's—and that side in the most flattering light. As a result, a 509, or one of the 509's detectives (called *dix*), tries to investigate all sides.

509ing has its dangers. Mer

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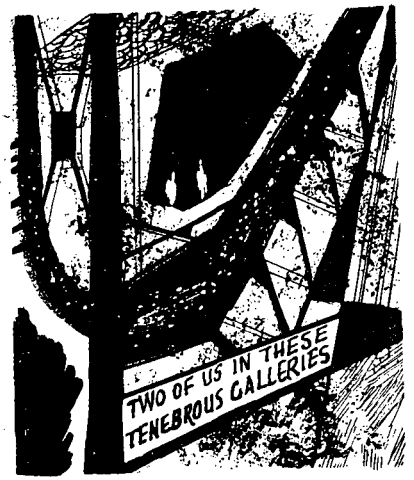
Perbran (2702-2812) of Propus II died in the line of duty; an empathetic telepath, he drowned in another being's stream of consciousness.

But 509ing has its compensations. Bocediga Mani (3226-3312) of Matar II spearheaded the successful fight to forestall zeal-inflamed agents of museums. These, thinking to race against time, sought by any means, including kidnaping and quick-freezing of individuals, to lay in a hoard of specimens of a race growing rare, and by doing so were speeding the race's doom of "phylum, phorgetum."

The following examples show how Advice to the Lovelorn gradually altered, how it grew from handling emotional problems on the interpersonal level to those on the supracultural level.

FROM the microfiles of Kon Satya (2613-2718) *of Juge X, whose affectation of simplicity is of a piece with his being the founder* (2735) *of the Primitivists, a group of* 509s *who believe that a being destroys his feelings by scrutinizing them, his thinkings by analyzing them.*

Dear 509 Satya: My spouse doesn't love me. Oh, he shows some degree of affection, but if he sincerely loves me, why does he stop short of the very thing that would make me the happiest female on Alphard I?



Instead, I am among the most anguished and bitter. You see, there are just the two of us in these tenebrous galleries and to make it even worse, I am often alone because he spends so much time traveling on surveying missions far from his home and his office. I feel so solitary, but he selfishly says he is satisfied with things the way they are and doesn't conceive of adding to our family.

This is especially rattling because ever since it became obvious that he was failing to live up to his familial duties, my friends have started to insinuate that he's stingy. And though I strongly deny such insinuations, I privately suspect that he's unwilling to add to anything but his bundle. It embarrasses me so to see even my mother and step-

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mothers. It is awfully trying to have to meet their sympathizing but scandalized stares.

I feel less and less like leaving our dim house, although staying in this echoing solitude is maddening enough to make me want to scream. Meanwhile, my thews mat as I idle in my narrow zone of living. Row upon row of galleries go to waste—and yet the effect is constricting. To my horror, I find myself tempted to say or do something shocking or upsetting—anything to cast off the weight of gloomy days and nights. How I long to hear the slither of little coils!

Do you see hope for us? Or do you suppose my spouse has been surreptitiously romancing while on his surveying missions?

Nonplused

Dear Nonplused: Informants tell my dix no outside romancing. Speaking cold-bloodedly, is bad sign.

Embarrassing, you, belonging polygamous society, have husband having only one wife, namely you.

No need feeling shame consulting me, Nonplused. Am understanding. (Not like my wives, one under-understanding, other over-understanding.)

Elementary problem, easy answer.

Is binding on husband when first wife is proposing to other female, in husband's behalf, she become another better fraction. (Is joke.)

Is possible pitfall? Is. Like what? Husband showing new wife overfondness. Resultant position of old wife? (Is speaking frankly, watch!) Eased out, praise be. Why praise be? Is profitable market. Many husbands hunting old-fashioned wife. (Please send fostat of self.)

509 Satya

FROM the microfiles of Tib Seve (2628-2720), a 509 of Pleione V. His fine job during the notorious Love Riots that had the Galaxy agape won him the rank of Senior.

Dear Sr. 509 Tib: Three double-moons ago, I married a priestess of the Marsupial Totem of Merope VI. Pretty quickly, I noticed a clicking sound whenever she pranced.

I found that her pouches—the fore pouch, at least; the after pouch has remained veiled—contained pellets of some kind and that, day by day, the fore pouch was emptying.

I was very curious, but profane prying into the personal practices of a priestess is prohibited, so I prudently put no questions. But I paid heed and it repaid me with a closer glimpse.

The pellets were parched peas.

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Pleasing my spouse is my prime aim. Realizing she was partial to peas, I quickly purchased a quantity of best quality peas in the borso—enough to fill a twelve-gallon pot. And to surprise her, I quietly deposited some every evening while she pounded the pillow.

My peak performance came on the night I poured a palmful of peas without provoking a quiver in response.

But although I patiently prevented her supply from petering out, a pall fell upon her. I quadrupled my pains. But as time passed, she acquired a Tower of Pisa posture and a paranoiac look. This worried me, the more so as she had let drop that she was to undergo the added strain of presiding at secret ceremonies.

Nine days ago, late on the Day of the Didelphic Oracle, I was foggily pondering the problem of restoring her physical and psychic balance, when a posse of priestesses paraded into our home. Their measured pace was like the pounding pulse of doom. As one, they stopped and, ignoring me, gave my wife a pregnant look.

It was more than she could bear. With a piercing cry, she lost her self-possesion and passed into a coma. The posse departed as it had come.

On waking, my wife withdrew into a shell. She sits staring at the opposite wall. Please tell me how to help her regain her poise.

Oura

Dear Oura: I'm not privy to the Marsupial Mysteries, but I think I can unperplex you. The way I figure it, you're the precipitating factor.

Your wife wasn't eating the peas. She was transposing one pea per day from her fore pouch to her after pouch. They weren't her particular passion. They were for computing the passage of time.

Your interfering made her lose count, stuffed her after pouch full to bursting, gave her a list and a persecution complex.

Both of you should have minded your proverbial Ps and Qs. Your wife should have perceived peril more promptly. The excess pea avoirdupois should have given her the cue. Instead of apparently going haywire and thrusting peas into her after pouch, regardless of the count, she should have immediately subtracted the number of peas there from the number of days from festival to festival. In that way, she wouldn't have let the Day of the Didelphic Oracle find her missing from her post.

Her sister priestesses plainly consider this a grave infraction. There's no telling how they'd react if you were quixotic enough

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to confess the part you played. I suggest you take your wife to a more peaceful place.

Sr. 509 Tib

FROM the microfiles of Rod Piller (2925-3014) of Atik I. He won renown for answering a tortuous question with, "Huh?"

Dear 509 Piller: Due to the type of sexual dimorphism peculiar to Algol II, my wife has a much greater amplitude and rate of tremor than I. To me, she seems a blur, a shimmer on the verge of coming into being, green as copper and gray-pink as manganese—the way all the females of Algol II look to all the males.

But I had seen stop-motion fostats of her, and I fell in love with her and wooed and won her.

The other day, we had a family reunion and you can imagine the shock I suffered when I found that the weary-looking female clinging to my strigil in the photo of that occasion is not the girl I fell in love with!

It now turns out there was a switch and it was my genuine love's homely sister I married and have been living with for seven years!

Worse yet, since our return from the reunion, another fear has been plaguing me. What if there has been another switch and the female stridulating so cheerfully about my house is not the homely sister, but her even *homelier* one?

My fear is not entirely groundless. A ewer of milk still churns to butter in my wife's grasp, but the consistency somehow seems different.

How may I know peace once more?

Heartheavy

Dear Heartheavy: You fell in love not with the girl you took to be your wife, but with her fostat. You're in love with love's shadow. For seven years, you lived happily in the illusion that your wife was the female in the fostats. In reacting to the revelation that she wasn't, you pass over several elements lightly.

Doesn't it seem strange that, in seven years of wedded bliss, an

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induced sympathetic vibration has never, even momentarily, put you in phase with your wife?

You've resisted. Admit it now, you didn't *really* want to see her. You've been content with a blur, for even the "genuine love" couldn't have come up to your unaging image of her.

You could end your doubts by snapping a fostat of your wife or by shining a stroboscopic light on her in the dark, flashing it in time with her vibration to see her as clearly as if she were frozen. But you prefer to preserve the image in your mind.

So consider this possibility: your wife may be neither what you term the homely sister nor what you term the homelier sister. She may be what you think of as the lovely sister.

You'll come to believe this. The pendulum will swing from pessimism to optimism. When you reach the far end of the arc, have your local doctor dose you with titanium (for mordant) and chlorine (for substitution reaction). These chemicals will lock you in the blissful state you desire—until the next family reunion.

509 Piller

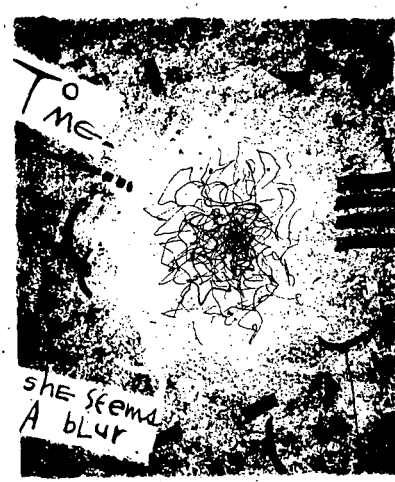
FROM the microfiles of Ekhah Pos (2913-3113) of Korneforos V. He arranged the 509 Anthem synesthetically, for which the Galactic Council awarded him the Anthelion Medal with Meteor Cluster, struck off in type metal.

Dear 509 Pos: How hard it is for me to find the right words! For, out of a full heart, I must tell you of my woe. Only yesterday, I was an innocent, cheerful female of Korneforos VI. Today—

But to begin at the beginning.

I was standing out in the open, forgetting my mother's preachings. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a great moving shadow. Before I could even think of trying to escape or to call out for help, a highwheeling figure swooped down upon me. My heartbeat drowned in the winnowing of his wings and I fainted.

When I came to, I was in the



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antechamber of the nest of a young male whom I have known ever since my pre-nubile days. I had held him in high awe, but this about-facing of his tore away the veil and I can see him for what he is—the antithesis of honor.

He laughs as I cry. He and his myrmidons are keeping me captive against my will and seem to enjoy watching me throw dust in my eyes. I wring my antennae in vain. The vulgar creature is adamant, even though he does try to soothe me occasionally with butter words and the promise of brand-new lithium-beryllium furnishings for this nest.

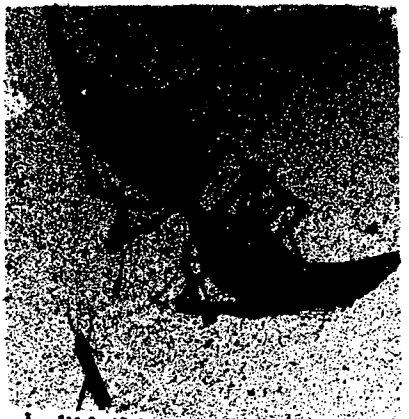
But such antics just make me bridle and antagonize me the more. "*Enough*!" I say sternly, italicizing the word. And my thoughts go back to that moment when I stood in the clearing. How my chest expanded with hope—hope that I might always maintain my purity! In that hang-yawn second when I first saw the shadow, little did I anticipate the terrible anticlimax!

Mournful

Dear Mournful: Atta girl!

509 Pos

Note. In his column, 509 Pos added the following postscript for the benefit of non-Korneforotes:



A HIGHWHEELING FIGURE SWOOPED DOWN UPON ME

In this girl's society, a bride must emote, making public her antipathy to marriage—no matter how glad she is privately. As a victim of violence, she need not be ashamed that in her essentially ascetic society she is embarked upon a passionate relationship. Her honor is still semantically intact. Her lamentations will soon be at an end. The smile will emerge and displace the sob, for marriage, first and last, is the goal.

FROM the microfiles of Hansa Munkar (2633-2722) of Nekkar V. Atom-tracing was his hobby and he managed, in the course of repeated trips to Terra, to carve a lasting name for himself by reassembling Caesar's own dust.

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Dear 509 Munkar: O hear me, I beg of you! I am of the Marababa Sahem tribe on the outlying planet Tau Pegasi CXV. Recently I moved to the ornate state capital and married a girl of the Aaabb Abaaa Babab tribe, love triumphing over distaste for these fashionable, dissolute members of the ruling circle.

O I never would have become incensed about—much less questioned — my wife's faithfulness hadn't I a good friend who in all innocence idly asked me, at a party, for the name of the seductive perfume my wife was wearing.

With an effort of will, I disguised the dismay that threatened to distend my veins. I told him calmly that I had forgotten the name, but would let him know it as soon as I recalled.

At home, at the first opportunity, I searched. At last I discovered an ounce of Carvyl Eau de Fen 9 hidden behind flush-seamed paneling.

To *hear* was shock enough, but O when I *saw* that my wife was indeed wearing perfume, not hell or the dismal hereafters of the sextillion planets could equal the pardonable jealousy that began to quinch in my vitals.

She is not using the scent to please me. O no! We of Marababa Sahem have no sense of smell.

Ergo, she is using the perfume

to lure into baneful dalliance other males, members of her own tribe, who are able to smell. (O I discount my good friend, although he is one of them. I owe him so much for unwittingly enlightening me.)

Even in my distress, I must admire the way the fair betrayer hides demon amid devotion. But the many little things that she sashays around doing for me mean simply so many disquieting duplicities and ring hollowly now that her disloyalty is disclosed. O even the venison ragout that she learned to dish Marababa Sahem style to please me is a burden to down without disgorging; it has me gargling and grunting and panting under the grueling grind of displaying a dissembling smile as if singing a hymn to her handiwork.

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Dissolving this dishonored marriage is out of the question. By the fundamental law of my tribe, I must wreak vengeance upon her. With this end in view, I am husbanding my strength. When I feel my hate dislodge my love, I will slay her, lest she cheat and recheat and bring disgrace upon us.

O it seems odd that I should be discussing the snatching of life from the one I believed the quintessence of discretion—so odd that I would be laughing if such laughter did not hurt.

But I must prove I am no mere cipher in a divided duty to benighted love, but a thing of elemental passions, true to the traditions of my tribe.

O distinguished 509, please lend me your moral support!

Loc Osis

Dear Loc: Very melodramatic, but don't be so ready to listen to your so-called friend.

He was being vindictive when he asked you what perfume your wife wears. Dix-informed, I can tell you he's a scorned ex-suitor of your wife's. Plainly, he's venting his spite.

Your wife wears perfume; that's so. But you infer wrongly. True, she's not wearing it to please you, except indirectly.

Being unable to smell, you haven't realized that your uncomplaining wife uses perfume to mask the what-is-to-her-nose-distasteful smell of the what-is-to-your-eye-cordial showers of magnesium and chlorine that spice your food.

Even if that weren't the case, it would still be only natural for a wife to want to smell her best, even if her husband couldn't appreciate it.

At any rate, you'll have to sublimate your venous rage—my dix have warned your friend to leave the planet. He's probably a good distance past Alhena by now.

509 Munkar

FROM the microfiles of Kozm Ondas (2627-2810) of Dabih V. One rare exception to the "no stock answer" rule of Advice to the Lovelorn was the attempt by 509 Ondas to alter the pattern of culture of the dying society of Dabih X, whose resistance to reason she sought by repetition to wear away. Here are the typical question and the form letter in answer.

Dear 509 Ondas: I desire to possess a beautiful girl who lives in—. Can you recommend a reliable mercenary who will undertake to abduct her for me and bring her to my home in—?

— —

Dear— —: You speak not of

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loving but of coveting. You won't offer the girl your love and ask for her alula in marriage, because she might turn you down and your pride won't let you risk refusal. You won't attempt to run off with her yourself, because you might slip up and to fail would puncture your pride.

Although your authorities, believing that fair facts and foul are equally valid when it comes to love, condone the hiring of mercenaries, I must counsel you to heed the sad case of Vry Nin.

The lovesick and pridesick Nin, smarting under the rebuff of his suit, hired mercenaries from Gamma Vulpeculae. He tried to make the briefing short because he found their presence repulsive.

He promised Oca, their captain, a lordly gift if the legion the latter headed followed orders to the letter. The mercenaries listened impassively as Nin marked out the acts they were to perform. The simple eyes dotting their torsos stared stonily, even though the vehemence of Nin's spite, when he ordered the slaying of the girl's family, sprayed them with yellow mist.

But when he came to describe his love object, the mist turned rose. How could he convey the tantalizing texture of her shapely—

He lacked words. So he said, "You'll see there the very most

beautiful creature in creation. That's my loved one."

Dismissed, they padded away. It seemed to Nin he waited for a mega-era. At last they padded back.

Nin looked for the girl eagerly but vainly.

Had her family outbid him and turned the fire of the mercenaries back upon Nin?

He grabbed for his weapon, but Oca was quicker.

He explained to the dying Nin that the girl's family had apparently feared a raid and must have spirited the girl away. Wary of booby traps, the mercenaries had searched the house. They had found only a warped and warty crone. Following Nin's orders, they had blasted her.

A doddering look destroyed

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Nin's mien; "warped and warty" were the words he had lacked!

"That was my love!" he moaned.

So, my dear— —, I hope you will learn from the wrong way the right way to win your love.

509 Ondas

FROM the microfiles of Dod Ona (2971-3152) of Naos III. After long years of service, he met his death when a galloping herd of suozzons mistook the creaking of his sinews—the key thongs, to be exact—for their mating call.

Dear 509 Ona: The log of the *Griph,* my spacecraft, shows I am asking you the same question for the third time. Why don't you answer?

I'll restate the facts.

I made a forced landing in a clearing on Alpha Pyxidis I. I leafed through the *Universal Periplus* in my chart room, but it's sadly out of date and tells me nothing about this system. I determined for myself that conditions on this planet were favorable, debarked, made repairs.

There was nothing to hold me; the planet seemed only virgin forest. I was about to re-embark when a figure suddened in and out of sight. A girl. No more than a glimpse of olive complexion and willowy form, but it was enough to quicken my pulse.

I followed her into the forest. Gone! I would have called, but my fear of further frightening her caused the opening between my vocal cords to stick. All that afternoon, I looked.

With the coming of dusk, I felt a chill and thought to fell a tree for fuel. But immediately a cheerful warmth enveloped me and I made my way craftward in a glow.

Early next morning, I seemed to hear a voice calling faintly. I was soon at the edge of the clearing. Something drew my gaze to a tree-hollow. My hand came out with a crude valentine.

It bore my name.

I reasoned that colonists of my kind had settled here secretly, that the girl had seen me and was shyly making known her love.

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She'd slipped into the *Griph* while I was hunting her through the wood, learned my name from my log.

Elated, I waited the next manifestation.

It was a makeshift mailbox hung on a tree. Lettered on it was "Jeanie." I've always liked that name.

Something white fluttered ghostlike down from a tree across the clearing. No one around. I dived for it. A blank sheet of paper. Getting the idea, I wrote a love letter on it and dropped it in the slot.

I went back to the *Griph* to spruce up. When I returned to the mailbox, the letter was gone.

Since then, a stream of messages. For some reason, Jeanie keeps shifting the mailbox from tree to tree.

Sometimes I think we've trysted in isolated places, because I dimly remember embracing Jeanie. Sometimes Jeanie seems less than a dream, a fragment of a figment, a delusion—at these times, I've tried to reach you.

Have I been traveling alone too long?

I can't account for my fleeting moods. A while ago, I started to carve an arrow-pierced heart in a tree, but something stayed my knife hand.

Another time, I began to worry that my food was running low. Magically, I found a plant bearing something like a cross between breadfruit and hackberry —just when I'd decided to give up the elusive Jeanie, and leave.

Where are Jeanie's folks? Where is Jeanie now? I can't stand not knowing. I'm loth to stay, loth to go.

Please answer.

R. A. Jesse

Dear R. A.: I've deliberately delayed answering. Sorry to blight your romance after letting you pine for 71 days, but that's the length of the mating season.

Let me explain. You're not loco. You *have* been involved in a budding romance, but not your own.

"Jeanie" exists, though only in your mind.

The Alpha Pyxidites made her bloom there.

They're the trees. They palm off telepathic suggestion on mobile forms of life.

For your appointment in lieu of samara (if you'll pardon a pedantic quip), they adapted to your unconscious desire to meet your dream mate.

You may leave now, knowing you've won laurels as a pollinating middleman. You may also legally claim a reasonable service charge.

509 Ona

—EDWARD WELLEN

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man's best friend

By EVELYN E. SMITH

Sometimes a job comes after the man . . . and this one came after Gervase like a tiger!

THE annunciator aroused Gervase from pleasant semi-slumber. He knew the interruption was his own fault for not having turned off the device, but he so seldom had a visitor that he could hardly be blamed for his forgetfulness. Frowning, he pressed the viewer button. A round, red face appeared on the screen. "May I be the first to congratulate you, Mr. Schnee?" it said.

"You may, indeed," Gervase replied. "But for what?"

"You haven't heard the news? Good, then I'm the first. I imagine I got a head-start on the others because of my superior facilities for locating you. Your address wasn't given; these pronouncements do tend to be a bit vague. Matter of tradition, I suppose."

"I haven't heard any news for days," Gervase said, uncomfort-

Illustrated by MEL HUNTER

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ably conscious that he was apologizing. "I've been listening to my sound-tapes and—and meditating," he added defiantly. "Wait a minute; I'll let you in."

He struggled with the door-stud, but the door refused to open. The autobursar must have neglected to pay the door bill—probably because Gervase had failed to put enough money into it. But his allowance was limited and sound-tapes, not to speak of meditators, were so expensive.

Sighing, Gervase got up and opened the door manually. The individual outside was short and stout and dressed, unfortunately, in the uniform of an upper-echelon salesman. Gervase had been caught! Still, he reminded himself, no one could force him to buy anything. He was a free citizen.

"Well, come in if you must," he said grudgingly. "I suppose the big news is that I'm the lucky householder to whom the Little Gem Room Expander will first be offered."

"Nothing of the sort!" the man replied indignantly.

At this point, Gervase noticed with surprise that the other wore a j e w e l e d merchant-prince's badge. Apparently this was one of those consumer reaction tests in which executives themselves participated to check on their employees.

THE man remembered to smile. "The Prognosticator has just given its fortnightly Prognostication. You, Mr. Schnee, are going to be our new Ruler." He seized the young man's limp hand and shook it enthusiastically. "And I'm sure you'll be a splendid one, too."

Gervase accepted a pale green cheroot from the dispenser. It shook in his lips. "And what's to become of the old Ruler?"

"You're scheduled to dispose of him sometime this month. Now, Mr. Schnee," the man went on briskly, "allow me to introduce myself. I am Bedrich Florea, vice president of the Florea Munitions and Container Corporation." He extracted a gleaming weapon from his brief case and offered it to Gervase. The young man recoiled. "If you will only agree to shoot Overlord Kipp with a Florea Semper Fidelis Gun," the executive continued, "my corporation will be happy to place a substantial amount of credits at your disposal in any bank you choose. Six billion, to be exact. Now if you'll just sign here on the dotted line . . ." He held out a stylus temptingly.

"Nonsense!" Gervase backed away.

"Even a Ruler can use money. Bribery for government officials, bread and circuses for the people—oh, money's a very useful com-

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modity, Mr. Schnee. Shall we say seven billion?"

"I don't doubt that money is useful," Gervase replied, thinking wistfully of seven billion credits. "But when I said 'nonsense,' I meant the Prognosticator. The whole thing's a lot of —well, nonsense. A whole planet of supposedly intelligent people listening to what's nothing more, really, than an oracle! A machine can't read the future. It's impossible."

Florea's eyes bulged. "Mr. Schnee, that's sacrilege! You can't—confound it, sir, you can't talk that way about The Machine. After all," he added in a more placatory manner, "let's look at this reasonably. Machines can and do answer all the problems of our daily life, so why shouldn't a superior machine be able to tell the future?"

"If you ask me," Gervase all but sneered, "behind the wires and gimmicks and whatnots in The Machine, there's a secret room in which a half-mad, half-intoxicated old priestess sits delivering her Delphic pronouncements. Might as well have an aboveboard oracle and be done with it."

"Now, now, Mr. Schnee—" the executive smiled with obvious effort— "even our Ruler shouldn't flout the Authority of Machinery. Of course, it's all right when you're alone with friends, like me, but in public—"

The annunciator sounded again. An eager face appeared on the screen. "Mr. Schnee," an equally eager voice said, "I'm from the *Daily Disseminator*. How does it feel to be Ruler Prognosticate?"

There was the sound of a scuffle. His face disappeared, to be replaced by two others. "Mr. Schnee, will you tell us in your very own words—"

As Gervase clicked off the interviewer, the vidiphone blinked. Gervase lifted the receiver. The face of Overlord Kipp himself came into view, pale but composed. "I understand you're the young man who is destined to dispose of me and take my place?"

GERVASE paled also. "Honestly, Your Honorship, I haven't the slightest inten—"

"You'll make it quick and painless, won't you? And it really would be very decent of you to give me the exact day and hour of my—er—demise so I won't have to sit around waiting."

"But, really—"

"You don't look like a hard-hearted chap. As a matter of fact, I would say, offhand, that you had a kind face."

"Well, thank you, but—"

"I do wish you'd stop shilly-

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shallying and name the day. By the way, have you anything on for tomorrow?"

"I didn't have anything special planned—"

"Splendid! Suppose you come over to the Palace around one o'clock or so. We can have a bite of lunch and discuss the matter together. After all, I think you'll agree that I have been a reasonably good Ruler and so I have the right to die with dignity." He looked pleadingly at Gervase.

"Oh, absolutely," the young man said in haste. "No question of it. I think it's a very good idea to have a chat about it first. Awkward to—dispose of someone you haven't met previously."

The dictator gave him a wan smile. "Thank you, Mr. Schnee. I hope you'll find your successor as cooperative as yourself."

The screen darkened.

"Hmmm," Gervase mused. He took a lavender cheroot, forgetting he still held the lime one. "I wonder whether he wants me to make an appointment so he'll have a band of counter-assassins ready to kill me, saving him the expense of a stand-by guard. He is noted for his thriftiness, you know. Perhaps I just shouldn't show up at all."

"He wouldn't dream of doing anything of the sort," Florea said austerely. "Overlord Kipp knows what is due to his position. He has a sense of duty and responsibility which, unfortunately, seems to be lacking in his successor . . . if you'll excuse my speaking frankly," he added in haste. "I am, of course, considerably older than you and so I feel—"

"It's quite all right," Gervase reassured him. "You may speak freely."

"Furthermore," Florea continued, "if he had you killed, the people would probably give him a painful and lingering death for attempting to interfere with the course of destiny . . . There, I hear them now!"

And they could indeed hear the sound of voices raised in song—so many and so loud that they penetrated the soundproofing of the walls. "The *polloi* are coming to hail their new Leader," Florea beamed.

"Well, I'm not going to do it!" Gervase declared. "They can't make me kill him and take over and that's flat. I'm not the administrative type — never have been."

FLOREA took a cheroot of his own out of a platinum portable. "In that case, the people probably will kill *you* for attempting to interfere with fate."

"But I wouldn't have done anything!" Gervase protested.

"There are sins of omission as well as commission. Come now,

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it's true a Ruler's life expectancy isn't very long—at least it hasn't been for the last few reigns—but it's longer than yours will be if you refuse to fulfill your destiny."

"I wouldn't make a fit Ruler," Gervase said desperately. "Consider my origins. I wouldn't tell this to anyone but you—I'm illegitimate. I don't even know who my father is."

The other man smiled again. "It's a wise child who knows his own father. And some of the most celebrated leaders in history have been illegitimate. Look at William the Conqueror."

Gervase turned on the historiscope, dialed 1066 A.D., looked, shuddered, and turned it off. "I don't think that's much of a recommendation!"

"You see," Florea told him encouragingly, "almost anybody can be a leader. The important thing is that he be *destined* for leadership."

"But I'm no good! Everybody says so. I've never done a thing in my life. My aged mother has had to work to support me."

"Time enough that you stood on your two feet, my boy!" the businessman said, clapping the youth upon the shoulder. "And remember, destiny must take its course."

He flung open the door. A cheering crowd stood outside. "My friends, allow me to introduce you to your new Ruler—Gervase Schnee!"

A hoarse shout of approval went up.

"He is planning to assassinate Overlord Kipp with a Florea Semper Fidelis Gun. Florea Semper Fidelis Guns retail from c2.98 for the Peasant's Pistol all the way up to c1089.56 for the Super Deluxe Conspirator's Model, but each is the best obtainable for the price. Mr. Schnee, of course, will use the Super Deluxe model."

There were more cries, cheers and shouts.

"Thank you for your—for your confidence and support," Gervase said brokenly. "I only hope I prove worthy of them."

Gervase lunched with Overlord Kipp the next day and was not assassinated. The disposal was set for the coming Tuesday and announced to the public. Gervase was so nervous, he couldn't sleep the night before. When, early in the morning, he finally did manage to doze off, he was awakened by the encouraging telegrams that kept pouring in.

At nine, he finally got up and dressed himself in the immaculate black-and-silver assassin's uniform that had been custom-made for him without charge by an eminent tailor. He was in no mood for breakfast, so he went

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outside to the handsome black-and-silver limousine that had been presented to him by a thoughtful industrialist. As he emerged from his door, a brass band struck up the national anthem and the crowd waiting outside broke into cheers suitably restrained to fit the melancholy occasion.

GERVASE bowed wanly left and right as he got into the car. His two hired assistants, dressed in the customary black cloak and hood of the body-remover, were, he noticed, already seated beside the chauffeur. They did not turn their heads as Gervase entered, but preserved the traditional impassivity of their calling.

The band started to play a funeral march as the car moved slowly down the boulevard. Stands had been put up all along the route and he was greeted by subdued cheering and applause from crowds neatly arranged according to rank. Little children of all classes rushed out into the street to present him with bouquets of flowers.

The television cameras joined him en route and followed him all the way to the Palace. On the steps, Bedrich Florea awaited him, magnificently garbed in full executive uniform, his jewels flashing in the clear sunlight.

"Allow me to load your Super Deluxe Conspirator's Florea Semper Fidelis Gun for you, Overlord Prognosticate," he announced in a ringing voice, as he turned his profile toward the cameras.

"It's already loaded," Gervase said, nervously clutching the gun in his pocket.

"Permit me to check it then." Florea put out an eager hand.

Gervase executed a deft chassé in the opposite direction. "It's perfectly all right, I tell you! No one," he added in a burst of inspiration, "would have any difficulty in loading a Florea Semper Fidelis Gun."

"That's right," the baffled munitions magnate admitted, falling back reluctantly. "Whether you buy the Peasant's or the Conspirator's Model, both have the same smooth free-loading mechanism . . ."

"Out of the way, Executive," a cameraman said, unceremoniously sweeping Florea aside as Gervase paced into the Palace, followed by his two black-robed henchmen, carrying an elaborate, gold-mounted stretcher between them.

"Candy, popcorn, hashish, yoghurt!" yelled a strident voice behind them. "Buy your refreshments here!"

Overlord Kipp stood beside his desk, dressed in his finest uni-

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form—which was, however, virtually invisible, it was so bedecked with glittering and sparkling medals and decorations. Gervase waited patiently while the soon-to-be-disposed-of Ruler made a speech pointing out the numerous benefits and improvements his reign had brought to the people. It was rather a long speech and Gervase's nose began to itch. He would have liked to scratch it, but the cameras were pointing directly at him. Life as Ruler, he saw, was going to be a long series of similar repressions. He sighed. But what could he do? Nobody could go against the Prognostications.

Finally the speech was finished. "Good-by and good luck, Overlord Schnee," Kipp said. He stood, waiting.

Gervase fired. There was a loud report. Kipp crumpled to the ground.

Gervase hurled the Florea Semper Fidelis Gun to the desk. "Everyone will now please leave," he ordered in calm but firm tones, "while the removers take over."

"Why can't we televise the removal?" a daring cameraman asked. "Something new."

THERE was a shocked silence and then a babble of indignant voices. Gervase held up a weary hand. The voices stopped.

"That sort of thing just isn't done," he told the cameraman with an Olympian smile. "Please leave as quickly as possible—all of you. I might want to meditate."

They scuttled out backward, the cameras still grinding. Gervase pressed the studs that shut and bolted the door.

"Whew!" said Overlord Kipp, sitting up. "I didn't think I'd be able to stand that much longer. You're a good shot, Schnee—that blank stung like crazy. And in a very tender spot, I might add."

"No time for chatting," Gervase said nervously. "We've got to get this over in a hurry. Now comes the part when your friends will have to look like real removers. I hope they can give it that professional touch."

"We are real removers in a sense," said one of the black-robed figures. "At least, both of us have participated in removals before." They dropped their hoods.

Gervase's mouth hung open. "Why, you're Overlord Moorhouse!" he said to one. "And I've seen pictures of you!" he told the other. "You're the one that came before him—Shinnick. You died before I was born—that is, you were supposed to have died. Both of you were. Moorhouse killed—was supposed to have killed you."

Ex-Overlord Shinnick smiled.

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"We're not precisely dead—only retired, you might say. In a way, anonymity is the same as death. And Overlords Moorhouse and Kipp—" he bowed toward them—"both had kind hearts, like yourself. The Prognosticator didn't say we had to be killed—just disposed of, as Kipp undoubtedly pointed out to you in your little talk together."

"Sorry I couldn't tell you the truth," Kipp apologized as he dusted off his uniform, "but you might have changed your mind and given us away."

"We've formed a sort of little club of dead Overlords," Shinnick elucidated. "After all, we're the only ones with whom we can associate safely—no danger of any one of us betraying the others."

"We're looking forward to the day when you join us, Overlord Schnee," Moorhouse put in eagerly, "assuming that your successor is of as generous a nature as we, of course. Do you play bridge by any chance?"

"You'd better hurry." Gervase worriedly changed the subject as he noticed the time on the wall chronometer. "If the four of us are discovered, the mob would tear us all to pieces."

"Right you are," said ex-Overlord Shinnick. "Get on the stretcher, Kipp. Bad enough we're going to have to carry you out; at least don't expect us to lift you up."

Kipp obediently assumed a recumbent posture. Shinnick and Moorhouse covered him with a black cloth and were preparing to march out when Gervase recollected himself and halted them. "Wait a moment—you'd better take off those medals first, Kipp, They come with the job."

"Grave-robber," said Kipp, reluctantly sitting up on his catafalque and unfastening the jeweled decorations.

WHEN the little procession had left, Gervase pressed a stud on the desk marked *Secretary*. A panel in the wall opened and a timorous-looking man virtually fell into the room. "Y-yes, Your Honorship?"

"The Prognosticator is right here in the Palace, isn't it?" Gervase asked, in a tone that would have been authoritative if his voice hadn't cracked right in the middle of *Palace*.

"Y-yes, Your Honorship."

"Lead me to it immediately."

"Su-certainly, Your Honorship."

As they left the room, Gervase picked the Florea Semper Fidelis Gun off the desk. It was too valuable a piece of property to leave lying around. The Palace was full of sticky-fingered civil servants.

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They passed through room after room containing bank after bank of computing machines, each more complicated in appearance than the last. Hordes of officials in the garb of hereditary scientist or technician bowed low as the new Ruler passed. The machines, of course, operated and repaired themselves automatically; nonetheless, they needed a good many attendants as befitted their exalted status.

Gervase and his guide finally came to the room where the Prognosticator itself was enshrined. The apartment was twenty stories high and a hundred meters wide, but it was none too large for all the flashing lights and spinning dials and buzzing relays and levers and cables which jammed it. The hundreds of first-rank scientists who waited upon the Machine stopped their tasks of dusting and polishing to greet the new Usurper with deferent acclaim.

"Leave me," he ordered, gesturing with the gun toward the door. "I would be alone with the Prognosticator."

"Certainly, Your Honorship. Certainly. Your wishes are our commands."

They backed out.

"You, too," Gervase told the secretary who had guided him.

"Y-yes, Your Honorship." The man skittered off.

When they had all gone, Gervase approached a small, unobtrusive door marked *Danger—No Admittance*. Dust lay thick on the sill, for it was seldom opened.

Gervase took a tiny, intricate piece of metal from his pocket and fitted it into the lock. Something inside clicked. The door swung open.

Beyond, a narrow flight of steps spiraled downward. Gervase descended them unhesitatingly until he came to another small door. This one was simply marked *Private*. He knocked on it.

"Aah, go butter your earlobes!" a cracked voice called from within. "Can't you read, you dumb cluck?"

"It's me, Gervase!" He pounded on the door with the butt of his gun. "Open up!"

THE door swung open creakily. Through the gloom inside, there could be dimly seen antique furnishings in a poor state of preservation and a still more imperfect state of cleanliness. An outmodedly streamlined twentieth-century typewriting machine was set on a costly metal stand with one caster missing. The flaps of the table were open—one held a chipped teapot, the other a dusty crystal ball and a dog-eared pack of Gypsy cards.

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Behind all this was a rare old psychoanalyst's couch, ripped open here and there and showing the original stuffing.

Reclining on the couch was an incredibly old woman wearing a quaint costume of a bygone era —long scarlet silk skirt, yellow blouse, great golden hoops swinging in her ears. She was sipping something out of a teacup, but it didn't smell like tea, at least not like tea alone. The ancient reek of gin pervaded and overpowered the general mustiness.

"Hello, son!" the old woman said, waving the cup at Gervase. "'Bout time you came to pay your old mother a visit." She cackled. "I kind of thought something like this would stir you up!"

"MOTHER," Gervase said reproachfully, "you know you shouldn't have done it."

"What did I do?" she asked, assuming a ludicrous posture of innocence.

"You fixed the Prognostications, that's what you did. Although why you had to pick on me—"

"Aah, I got tired of supporting you! You're a big boy—it's about time you earned your own living. Besides, I thought it'd be a good idea to elect a sympathetic administration. Sympathetic to me, that is. Palace needs a new ventilating system. Air in here's terrible. Smells as if something'd died and they were too stingy to give it a decent burial."

"But why didn't you use the Prognosticator to get new ventilation put in?" Gervase asked. "Seems to me you could have foretold everyone in the Palace would suffocate or something if it wasn't done."

"They'd have got around it, same way you got around killing Kipp."

Gervase blushed.

"You can't fool me!" she cackled gleefully. "I know everything that goes on around this place and a lot that doesn't." She reached over and tapped his knee. "But you'll pay attention to the Prognosticator, boy. Don't you try to weasel out of what it says by looking for double meanings. Time you Overlords learned that when the Prognosticator says something, it means it."

"Yes, Mother," he said.

"I'd hate to have to give orders to have my own boy disposed of. The last three disposals weren't so bad, but sometimes those things can turn out real messy."

"Yes, Mother."

She drank gustily from her teacup. "Maybe blood is thicker than water . . . but not much."

"Yes, Mother."

"And why shouldn't you listen

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to my Prognostications?" she demanded irritably, slamming her teacup down on the table so hard that the typewriter skipped. "Just because they're dolled up a little doesn't mean they're not true. Don't I have a crystal ball? Don't I have a Gypsy tarot pack? Don't I have tea leaves—best tea money can buy, too?"

"Yes, Mother."

"So?" She looked at him expectantly. "What are you going to do?"

Gervase took a deep breath and drew himself up. "I'm going to have the ventilating system attended to right away."

"That's my boy," she said fondly, draining another cup of tea and peering at the leaves. "I can see everything's going to work out fine—just fine."

—EVELYN E. SMITH

FORECAST

Next month introduces a bright new talent and brings back another that has been missing for too long.

Gerald Pearce is the talent new to science fiction; equipped with that rare blend of iron-muscled prose and poetic sensitivity found only in Hammett, Chandler and a few other Old Masters, Pearce makes his novelet THE DREAMING WALL spring-taut with suspense and heart-deep with feeling. As the narrator explains in frightened bewilderment, "It was as clean as a world can be—but why had Collins killed himself—and how was it I fell, I died, I saw another at the well?" There's an answer, of course, but it has to be found this side of death!

Mark Clifton returns with A WOMAN'S PLACE, a novelet that is likely to be as long remembered as his tender "Star, Bright" in these pages a couple of years ago. Home, you see, is where you hang up your spaceship—or it's bound to be if you have anyone like Miss Kitty along! And the devil of it is that Miss Kitty is neither a chicken nor a nesting hen! She's strictly no nonsense about anything, including the unfamiliar job of making a home where none had ever—repeat: ever!—been. But she's a great gal and you'll love her, stiff neck and blunders and all!

Groff Conklin's Five Star Shelf will return in the next issue.

Be on the lookout, too, for more information about PREFERRED RISK by Edson McCann, the $6,500 Galaxy-Simon & Schuster prize novel!

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Hurricane Trio

By THEODORE STURGEON

Having already died once, he found himself more alive than ever before—so alive that it hurt far worse than the agony of dying!

YANCEY, who once had been killed, lay very still, with his arm flung across the pillow, and watched the moonlight play with the color of Beverly's hair. Her hair was spilled over his shoulder and chest, and her body pressed against him, warm. He wondered if she was asleep. He wondered if she could sleep, with that moonswept riot of surf and wind going on outside the hotel.

The waves blundered into the cliff below, hooting through the sea-carved boulders, frightening

Illustrated by ASHMAN

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great silver ghosts of spray out and up into the torn and noisy air. He wondered if she could sleep with her gentle face so near his thumping heart. He wished the heart would quiet itself—subside, at least, to the level of the storm outside, so that she might mistake it for the same storm. He wished he could sleep. For two years, he had been glad he did not sleep. Now he wished he could; it might quiet his heart.

Beverly, Beverly, he cried silently, you don't deserve this!

He wished the bed were larger, so that he might ease away from her and be but thunder in a cannonade, merging into the hiss and smash and ugly grumble of the sea.

In the other bed, Lois shifted restlessly under the crisp sheet. Yancey looked at her without turning his head.

LOIS was a thing of long lines under the dim white, her face and hair two kinds of darkness on the pillow. She was lean and somber.

Beverly was happy and open and moved about like the bouncing ball which used to lead the singing at theaters, leaping along the lyrics.

Lois walked as if she did not quite touch the floor, and the tones of her voice were like the tones of her skin and the clothes she favored—dark and smooth. Her eyes were long and secret and her face was a floe. Her nostrils and the corners of her mouth and sometimes the slightest concerted movement of a shoulder and an eyebrow hinted at a heat submerged and a strength relaxed and aware, not asleep, not a sleep. Lois . . . a synthesis of subtleties, of mysteries, delicate scents and soft puzzling laughter.

She moved again. He knew that she, too, was staring tensely up into the mottled darkness. The spume-flecked moonlight was intolerant of detail, but Yancey had memorized her face. He knew of the compression of her lips, and that the corners of her mouth were softly turned despite the tension. He was deeply troubled by the sound of the sheet as she moved, for if he could hear that over the storm, how could Beverly miss the throb of his heart?

Then he all but smiled. Of course Beverly did not hear as he did, nor see, nor feel, nor think with all her mind. Poor Beverly, poor, bright, sweet and faithful, more wife than woman; how can you compete with one who is more woman than . . . anyone?

Better, this was better than the fearful joy that was like rage. His heart began to obey him, and he turned his cheek slightly to touch her hair. Pity, he thought, is a

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sharing sort of thing—you can feel the helplessness of the unarmed, whereas rage, like passion, stands apart from its object and is lonesome.

He settled himself now, and without moving he went limp in the thundering night, giving himself up to the glimmer and shift of his thoughts. More than anyone else on Earth, he was sure, he enjoyed being alive, and his perpetual delight was in being alive altogether, awake and aware, conscious of his body and how it lay, and where, and at the same time afloat like a gull on the wind of his thought, yielding, controlled.

Perhaps he enjoyed the dark part of his unending day the most, camouflaged by a coverlet and the closing of eyes. In the day, he lived with that which he commanded and that which, if he wished, he could command: at night, he lived with that which he *did* command. He could call a symphony to heel and make a syllogism stand and wait. He could cut a stack of places, fan a hand of faces, choose his pleasure of them and discard the rest.

His recall was pinpoint-perfect, back and back to the point where he had been dead; before that, only excellent. He used it now as a measure against his heart's rebellion, so that Beverly could sleep, and, sleeping, not know.

And because the idea of Lois, here, was unbearable, he let his mind take him back to Lois when she was only a secret. She had been an explosion within him, a pressure and a kind of guilt; but all the things she had been were things he could contain, and no one knew. So back he went, to his renascence; back through the time he had been dead, and still farther to Lois-first-seen, to a time when a man with a job and a wife and a settled gray life found this special astonishment.

THERE was a lake, and small cheap cabins crouched in a row to sip its shores. There was a "lodge" with its stilted forefeet in the water and its rump on a hillside. There were boats and a float, a splintery dance floor and a bar which purveyed beverages all the way up to beer.

Yancey, with little money and only two weeks vacation, had rented a cottage here sight unseen. He expected little of it, being resigned to the truism that a change of surroundings constitutes a vacation all by itself. He expected little of anything in those days. His life had reached a plateau—a long, narrow, slightly down-graded plateau where the horizons were close and the going easy. His job was safe and, by the chemistry of paternalism, would increase in value as it

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aged, for all a large business requires of the bulk of its employees is that they stay.

He had been married for seven years to the blithe and patient Beverly, who was content with him. There had been a time when they interrupted one another in the rush to share themselves, and a longer time when there seemed very little to say, which made them both vaguely unhappy, and they lived with a mild and inexpressible sense of loss. And at last they discovered that coded communication devised by most folk with their unexciting familiars: small-talk, half-finished sentences, faint interrogative and exclamatory sounds, and present (as opposed to absent) silences.

Life for Yancey and his wife was not dull—it was too unplanned for that—but its pulse beat between comfortable limits.

This unplanned quality—why make plans when life is basically so certain?—was responsible for their late arrival at the lake. Last year's map did not include the dozens of roads closed by the Thruway; somehow Yancey had never gotten around to having the spare fixed, so naturally they had a flat; then they had to drive back for the checkbook Yancey had forgotten, and of course it rained. It had rained all the previous night and all day, and when they turned into the lake road, it was past eleven at night and still raining.

They pulled up beside the lodge, where a glistening faded sign proclaimed OFFICE, and Yancey turned up his jacket collar and plunged out into the rain and floundered up the wooden steps. When there was no answer to his knock, he noticed a soggy pasteboard stuck between the doorframe and a loose pane. He tried to read it and could not.

He went to the head of the steps and called, "Bev! Turn the spotlight up here!"

BEVERLY, between the loose-valved clacking of the motor and the drumming of rain on the car roof, heard a voice but no words. She turned off the ignition and rolled the window down. "What?"

"The light. Spotlight. Shine it up here."

She did and Yancey went back to the door and crouched before the card. In a moment, he came back to the car and slid in, dripping.

"They're all in bed," he said. "Cabin 14."

"Which one is our cabin?"

"I don't know. They only confirmed the reservation. We'll have to wake them up." He pressed the starter.

And pressed it, and pressed it.

When the starter would deliver

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nothing but a click and a grunt, Yancey leaned back and blew sharply through his nostrils. "Wires wet, I guess."

"What are we going to do?"

"Walk. Or sit here."

She touched his sodden shoulder and shuddered. "It can't be too far. We'll have to take a bag."

"Okay. Which one?"

She considered. "I guess the brown one. It has my robe in it, I remember . . . I think."

He knelt on the seat and reached into the back, found and fumbled the brown suitcase out. "Better turn off the lights. Ignition, too."

"The ignition *is* off," Beverly said, trying it.

"*What*!"

"When you were on the porch. I couldn't hear you, so I turned it off."

The advantage of that status between married folk which communicates by grunts and silences is that scorn, as well as contentment, can be expressed with little effort. Yancey was simply and completely silent, and she said, "Oh, dear." Then, defensively, "How was I supposed to know you didn't turn it back on?"

Yancey merely snorted. Beverly huddled in the seat. "Now it's all my fault," she muttered. More than a statement of fact, it meant in addition that any discomfort from this point on would be laid to her, and would also be attached to the day's previous delays and exasperations, making her culpable in every way for everything.

Yancey maintained his silence. Anything he might say would militate in her favor. To say one thing would forgive her, another would give her some ground for defense or counterattack. There was no real vindictiveness in his silence. He did not care whether or not she accepted the guilt as long as it was clear that guilt was not his. To put it another way, married familiars in this stage, though not necessarily enemies, have little friendship.

THEY left the car by their respective doors, and the rain immediately increased as if it had been cued from the wings. The sporadic wind died completely and suddenly and water seemed to displace air altogether. It ran down Yancey's spine, it bashed at his eyelids, it threw gouts of mud up to his knees.

He felt his way along the fender and around the front of the car until he collided with Beverly. They clung together, gasping and waiting for some kind of light to penetrate the hissing deluge. Some did, at last, a sodden sky-glow with a dimmer echo from the lake, and they began to

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wade up the shore along the line of cabins.

Visitors to the lake have been known to complain that the cabins were built too close together. It is clear that such plaintiffs never walked the row in the seething black of a summer rain. Each cabin boasted a wooden post with a number, cut from plywood with a jigsaw, perched on it. These could be read by water-wrinkled fingertips and they seemed to be fully half a mile apart.

Yancey and Beverly did not attempt to talk; the only speech between them was a muttered number when occasionally they investigated one of the posts to check their progress. It was enough to make exasperation itself turn numb, not to be reawakened until they found cabin 12, bypassed the next and turned in at what should therefore be 14, only to find it called 15.

"Fifteen, fifteen!" Beverly wailed wetly. "Where's fourteen? It's gone!"

"Gone, hell," growled Yancey, uselessly wiping at the water streaming over his mouth. "That's it there, the one we just passed. Afraid to number a cabin 13. Superstition. Oh, well. You know a woman runs this place," he added.

Beverly inhaled, a sharp gasp at this injustice, but took in as much water as air and could only cough. They backtracked and fumbled their way up to the dark bulk of Cabin 14. Yancey dropped the suitcase noisily on the small porch.

"Yance! You'll wake everybody up!"

He looked at her and sighed. The sigh transmitted, "What did we come here for?"

He pounded on the door and they pressed close to it, trying to get some shelter from the decorative gable over the door. A light showed, the doorknob moved, and they stepped back into the rain.

And nothing, nothing at all told Yancey that, in this second, a line fell across his life, so that forever his biography would consist of the parts life-before-Lois and life-since-Lois, with nothing between them but a sheet of rain and a door that opened altogether, fearlessly.

HE said, "I'm Yance Bowman, this is my wife, and we—" And then he saw her face and his voice failed him.

Quickly, effortlessly Lois spoke into his sudden silence and made it unnoticeable. "Come in, come *in*!" And with one swift, balanced movement, she had taken the suitcase from his hand, whirled around them to reach out in the rain for the doorknob and,

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in closing the door, swept them in.

They stood panting and dripping, looking at her. She wore a maroon hostess robe with a collar that stood up like an Elizabethan ruff; the material draped from her wide, flat shoulders with the static fluidity of a waterfall, all movement even while she was still. Her slight turn and bend as she set down the suitcase told him that those wide shoulders were indeed shoulders and not padding, and the unself-consciously bare feet declared that here was a woman who would stand and look straight into his eyes.

Beverly spoke, or began to; he turned to her and saw that she was, by comparison, dumpy and wet and exceedingly familiar. "We didn't know which cabin to—"

"Never mind that," said Lois. "We'll have two weeks to explain ourselves to each other. First of all, you've just got to get out of those wet things, both of you. I'll heat some coffee."

"But-but-but we can't—"

"But you can," said Lois. "Not another word. Go on," she said, crowding them into the hall which led away to the left. "There's the bath. Take a shower. A hot shower." Without pausing, she scooped thick towels from a shelf and dropped them into Beverly's hands. She reached past them and turned on the bathroom light. "I'll get your bag."

She was gone and back before Beverly could get her mouth around another syllable. "Hurry now, before the muffins get cold."

"Muffins?" Beverly squeaked. "Oh, now, please don't go to that tr—" But she was in the bathroom with Yancey, with the door closed, and Lois's swift, light footsteps answering her like a laugh as they went down the hall.

"Well, I—" said Beverly. "Yancey, what can we *do*?"

"Like the lady says, I guess." He gestured. "You first."

"A shower? Oh, I *couldn't*!"

He pulled her over in front of the basin and aimed her face at the mirror. "Wouldn't hurt."

"I'm a *sight*!" She had one more second of hesitation, murmured, "Well . . ." and then pulled her soaking dress off over her head.

Yancey undressed slowly while Beverly splashed under the shower. About the time the mirror was thoroughly steamed up, she began to hum, high and happy.

Yancey's numbed brain kept recreating the vision of Lois as he had first seen her, framed in lamplight, which was in turn framed by a hurtling silver halo of rain. His mind formed it and

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bounced away, formed it again and again retreated. It would only look and look back; it would not evaluate. His world contained nothing like this. He doubted, at the moment, that it could.

YANCEY'S only analytical thought came as an academic question, not to be answered by any process he then knew: How could a woman be so decisive, so swift, yet so extraordinarily quiet? Her voice had come to him as through earphones, direct and with fullest quality, yet seeming not to reach the walls. Anyone else in the world, taking charge like that, would certainly have roared like a drill-sergeant.

"Don't turn the shower off," he said to Beverly.

"All right." She put a par-boiled arm through the curtains and he dropped a towel across it. "Mmm, good," she said, rubbing briskly as she emerged. "I feel as if we'd been kidnapped, but I'm glad."

He stepped into the shower and soaped up. The scalding water was good on his chilled skin; he felt muscles relax which he hadn't known were taut. It was far and away the best shower he had ever taken—up to the point when Beverly uttered a soft and tragic wail.

"What have you done *now*?" he inquired, his voice carrying a labored patience. He turned off the shower and peered through the mists at his wife.

She had a towel around her head like a turban and her pale blue chenille beach robe was thrown over her shoulders. "The black one," she said.

"Give me a towel. What black what?"

"Suitcase. This is all the beach things. There isn't a thing of yours here but your bathing trunks."

"This," he said after a suitable silence, "is just your night."

"Oh, Yance, I'm *sorry*."

"I'm sorry, too." He stared fixedly at her until she wilted. "I'll just get back into those wet clothes."

"You can't!"

"Got a better idea? I'm not going out there in bathing trunks."

There was a knock on the door. "Soup's on!"

Before he could stop her, Beverly called out with a distressed bleat, "Know what I did? I brought the wrong suitcase! There's nothing here for my husband to wear but his *bathing* suit!"

"Good," said the soft voice on the other side of the door. "Put it on and come on out. The coffee's poured." When they did not respond, Lois laughed gently. "Did you people come to the lake

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to be formal? Didn't you expect to be seen in bathing suits? Come *on*," she insisted, with such warmth that, in spite of themselves, they found some sheepish smiles and put them on.

"Coming," said Yancey. He took the trunks out of the open suitcase.

In the living room, a fire had been lit and was just beginning to gnaw on the kindling and warm a log. A table was set, simply and most attractively—gray place mats, black cups, wrought-iron candlesticks with black candles. There was a steaming glass urn and an electric toaster which clucked once and popped up two halves of an English muffin just as they sat down.

Lois came out of the kitchen carrying a black sugar bowl. She glided up behind them as they sat at the table, leaned over them. One long arm put the bowl down; her other hand touched Yancey's bare shoulder.

Something—

Something *happened*.

IN the other bed, Lois abruptly turned on her side, facing him. She reached over to the night table between the beds, found a cigarette. The wind died just then, taking a deep quiet breath for the next shriek, and in the jolting silence, a great sea smashed the cliff below. Lois struck her match, and the light and the explosion of water together plucked Yancey's nerves in a single shattering chord. He steeled himself and did not-start.

In the blinding flare of the match, Lois's face seemed to leap at him—a partial mask, centered on the arch of an eyebrow, the smooth forehead over it, the forehead's miniature counterpart in the smooth lowered lid itself. The arches were stable, flawless, things on which could be built a strong and lovely structure if one could only . . . only . . .

He lost the thought in the ballooning glow of her cigarette as she lay back and puffed quickly—too quickly for her to enjoy it, surely. She drew the glow into a ruddy yellow sharp-tipped cone and the smoke must have been hot and harsh to taste. Hot and harsh.

He moistened his lips.

A surge of anger began to rise within him, matching again the sea outside. With an approaching breaker, the anger mounted and swelled and exploded. But the breaker could turn to foam and mist, and disperse, and he could do nothing but clench his teeth and press his head back into the pillow, for he must not wake Beverly.

This was so unjust! Beverly gave him everything he wanted. She always had, especially since

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that time at the lake. Especially since . . .

Her capacity for giving amazed him, almost awed him. She gave with everything she did. Her singing was an outpouring. She laughed with all her heart. Her sympathy was quick and complete. She gave constantly, to him more than to anyone or anything else on Earth. They had—now—a marriage that was as good as a marriage could be. How, then, could there be room in him for this—this *thing,* this acute, compelling awareness of Lois? Why must there be this terrible difference between "want" and "need"? He didn't *need* Lois!

The anger subsided. He bent his arm and touched Beverly's hair. She moved, turning her head from side to side, burrowing closer in to his shoulder. This won't do, he thought desperately. Am I not the boy with the Brain—the man who can't be pushed around—who is never puzzled by anything?

GO back, Yancey. Go back again to where your world was full of Lois and you could control it. If you could do it then, with a tenth of the mind you have now, then why . . . why can't you . . . why is your heart trying to break your ribs?

He closed his eyes against the shouting silver of the night and the bloom of Lois's cigarette. Back, he demanded, go back again. Not to the hand on the shoulder. Afterward. The rain letting up, and the scurrying through the puddles and the sky-drip to their own cabin, the one next door. Hold it. Hold it right there . . .

Ah. He had it again; he was back two years, feeling again what it was like to be able to keep Lois to himself, and his heartbeat normal.

Impossible! But he had done it, for almost two whole weeks. Lois on the diving platform, then painted on the sky, forever airborne—forever, because awareness such as his photographed and filled the vision in his memory, she hung there still against a cloud. And the square dance, with the fiddle scratching away into an overloaded P.A. system and feet clumping against the boards, and the hoarse, happy shouter: "Alamen *lef* an' around we go, swing yore potner do-si-do . . . now swing somebody else . . . an' somebody *else* . . . an' somebody ELSE . . ."

And ELSE had been Lois, turning exactly with him, light and mobile in his arms, here and gone before he knew completely she was there, leaving him with a clot in his throat and a strange feeling in his right hand, where

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it had taken the small of her back. It seemed not to belong completely to him any more, as if her molecules and his had interpenetrated.

Oh, and Lois breaking up a fight between one of the summer people and a town man, drifting close, ruffling the hair of one and laughing, being a presence about whom no violence could take place. Lois backing the station-wagon skillfully among the twisting colonnades of a birch grove . . .

And Lois doing unremarkable things unforgettably—a way of holding her fork, lifting her head, ceasing to breathe while she listened for something. Lois glimpsed through the office window, smiling to herself. Lois reading the announcements at lunch, her voice just loud enough for someone else sharing, say, a porch swing with her, yet audible to eighty people.

Lois, for that matter, walking, standing, writing, making a phone call . . .

Lois alive on this Earth—that was enough to remember.

Nearly two weeks of this, waking with Beverly, breakfasting, swimming, boating, hiking with Beverly, and his preoccupation cloaked in the phlegmatic communications of familiarity.

What difference did it make if his silence was a rereading of Lois's face instead of a reconsideration of the sports page? He'd attempt to share neither with Beverly; what then was the difference? Earlier in their marriage, she might have complained that it was useless to have a vacation if he acted just the same during it as he did at home. At this stage, however, he was completely — one might say invisibly — Yancey. Just Yancey, like always.

HE MIGHT have kept it up indefinitely, except for a certain natural limitation on opposing forces. Such a limitation may be seen at work in a vessel of water with a cork floating in it. You may weight the cork with grains of lead until it sinks; you may remove grains until it floats again. But you may not remove exactly enough lead so that the cork will suspend itself like Mahomet's tomb. If it does not float, it will sink. If it does not sink, it will float. The line of demarcation between buoyant and not-buoyant is a definite one, but so fine that it may be found only by passing it.

There was such a line between possible and not-possible in Yancey's ability to contain his feelings about Lois. He did not know just where it was or what would make him cross it; but cross it he did, and there was no

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mistaking it once it happened.

It was a Thursday (they were to leave on Sunday) and, in the afternoon, Yancey had asked Lois to come to their cabin that evening. He blurted it out; the words hung between them and he stared at them, amazed. Perhaps, he thought, he was being facetious . . . and then Lois gravely accepted, and he fled.

He had to tell Beverly, of course, and he didn't know how and he made up, in advance, seven different ways to handle her in anticipation of the seven ways in which she might react. Naturally, each would result in Lois's coming. Exactly what the evening would be like, he could not predict, which was strange in a man who was so ready with alternatives when it came to making a hostess out of Beverly.

"Bev," he said abruptly when he found her pitching horseshoes back of the lodge, "Lois is coming for a drink after dinner."

Beverly tossed a horseshoe, watched it land, skip and fall, then turned to him. Her eyes were wide—well, they always were—and their shining surfaces reminded him, in that moment, of the reflecting side of a one-way mirror. What would she say? And which of the seven ripostes must he use to overcome her resistance? Or would he have to make up an eighth on the spur of the moment? He waited.

She bent down and picked up another horseshoe and said, "What time?"

So Lois came. Her light, firm knock might just as well have been on the base of his tongue, so immediately did he feel it. If, later on, his will failed him a little, it was because now he sat still using it up, and let Beverly go to the door.

BEVERLY, he thought, for her own sake, should not permit herself to be in the same room with Lois. Lois came in and filled the room, but without crowding. Lois went back and down into a chair as if carried by flying things. Lois's body grew up out of the cushions, supported by what she breathed, like an underwater plant. And Beverly bounced about with glasses and ice and talked . . . *talked*. What Lois did was something different; Lois conversed.

He sat dully, contributing little, watching, thinking his own thoughts. He was achingly aware of many things, but foremost was the realization that Lois was making an effort—a completely successful one, as far as he could judge—to put Beverly at her ease. She made no such effort for him, and he told himself with pride that this was because she had no need to; they understood

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one another and must make things easy for poor Beverly.

He lay back almost drowsily, soaking in Lois's presence as if she were the Sun and from her he was gradually acquiring a sort of tan.

Then they were alone in the room, when Beverly went to the kitchen, and then Beverly was wailing something about ice—oh, dear, but the Johnsons in Nine will have some; no, don't bother, I'll be right back—the screen door in the kitchen slammed and Beverly's quick feet went *bam-bam-bam* down the back steps, and ceased to exist as they encountered pine-needles; all this in a brace of moments, and he was alone with Lois.

He rose and went to the couch and sat where its corner touched the arm of the chair. It seemed to take all the energy he had; he wanted a cigarette, he wanted to speak. He could do nothing.

After a silent time, he felt Lois's gaze on him. He turned to her quickly and she looked down. He was glad because their heads were so close, and he had never examined her this way, slowly.

He wet his lips and said, "Only ten days."

She made an interrogative syllable.

"Knowing you." He rose suddenly and crossed in front of her. He put one knee on the broad arm of her chair and sat back on his heel, his other foot steadying him on the floor. She stayed just as she was, looking down at her long brown hands. "I want to tell you something, Lois."

A small frown appeared and disappeared on her smooth forehead. She did not raise her eyes.

"It's something I've never told even to . . . never told anyone."

LOIS moved a little. She did not raise her face, but now he had a three-quarter view of her profile. She waited, still as a held breath.

"The night when we arrived," he said. "You made coffee and I sat at the table. You came up behind me to put something down. You touched me."

He closed his eyes and put his arm across his chest and his hand high on his shoulder. "Something . . . *happened*," he said, with an unaccountable difficulty.

Yancey was, in a small way, an engineer. He began abruptly to explain with painful pedantry, "It wasn't static electricity. It couldn't have been because it was pouring outside and the air was humid, not dry. You were on the bare floor in your bare feet, so it wasn't one of those deep-pile rug phenomena. It wasn't anything . . ." he opened his eyes, swallowed . . . "static,

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or anything like that," he managed. Then he was quiet, watching her.

Her face, the flexible mask, was breaking up like an ice-floe in a sudden warm, strong current. Her brow was like a snowbank with the marks of a kitten's claws on it. There was a tear on her left cheek and the streak of one on her right, and her teeth were driving into her lower lip. The corners of her mouth were turned upward, precisely as they would be in a smile, and there was a delicate pucker in the flesh of her chin. She made not a sound. She rose, her eyes seizing his and holding them as she backed to the door. There she turned and ran out into the dark.

When Beverly came back, he was still half-crouched, balancing on the arm of the chair. "Why, where's Lois?"

"She left," he said heavily.

Beverly looked at him. She looked at his eyes, quickly at his hairline, his mouth, and again at his eyes. Then she went into the kitchen and he heard the ice she was carrying fall explosively into the sink.

She called out, "Is anything the matter, Yancey?"

"Nothing's the matter," he said, getting up.

They cleared up the glasses and ashtrays and went to bed. Lois was not mentioned. Nothing was mentioned. They went about the ritual of retiring in silence.

When the lights were out, he said, "I've had enough of this place. Let's go home in the morning. Early."

She was quiet for a long time. Then she said, "If you want to."

He thought she slept badly. He did not sleep at all.

IN THE morning, he drove furiously. For the first twenty miles, he could not understand what he felt; then he began to understand that it was anger. For another fifty miles, he could find no direction for the anger; none of the people involved had, after all, done anything, so how could there be anger?

Occasionally he glanced at Beverly. She ordinarily sat back, looking forward at the sky, sideways to scenery, or inward to whatever it was she communed with during those silent times they spent together. This morning, however, she sat straight and kept her eyes on the road ahead, which made him aware that he was driving too fast and annoyed him beyond description. Childishly, he increased both his speed and his anger.

And at last, with a feeling that approached relief, he found something to be angry at.

Beverly.

Why wouldn't she say, "Slow

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down!" Why had she agreed to let Lois come to their cabin? Why had she gone on blandly being herself this whole time, while he was tearing himself apart inside? Why hadn't she even questioned him when he decided so abruptly to leave? "If you want to," she'd said. "If you want to." What kind of self-respect was that?

Or maybe she just didn't care.

If you want to . . .

For the very first time in seven years, he realized that this was her code, her basic philosophy of life. They had red drapes in the living room. They had always had red drapes in the living room. Well, he liked red drapes. He'd said so and she had put up red drapes.

He glanced at her. She was watching the road tautly. He squeezed down a bit more on the accelerator.

The place they lived in, the job he kept, the food they ate and probably the clothes she wore—were they really chosen because they were what he wanted?

Were they what he wanted?

Should he have what he wanted?

Why not? Beverly had.

He laughed, making Beverly start violently. He shook his head at her, which meant either "I won't tell you" or "Mind your own business." He had disqualified himself from finding any flaw in this new and breathtaking conclusion and it made him exultant. He enjoyed speed in his exultation, and control.

He sent the car howling through a deep cut in the crest of a hill, and around the blind turn on the other side, which was where he collided with the spaceship and was killed.

AS IT WILL at times in the wake of a hurricane, the wind died. Less tractable, the sea punished the cliff unabated. The night was as noisy, but the the noise was so different that it was as shocking as sudden silence. In it, Lois angrily rammed her cigarette into the ashtray on the night table. She turned her back and then sighed. The sound was only half vocalized, but such a voice propagates more like light than like sound.

Beverly came hurtling up out of slumber and flashed free like a leaping fish, only to fall back and swirl near the under-surfaces of sleep. She raised her head, turning it as if seeking, but her eyes were closed.

"Hm?" she said sleepily. Then her face dropped to Yancey's chest again and she was still.

What I should do, thought Yancey wildly, is to sit her up and slap her awake and say, Look, Bev, you know what? I

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got killed that morning when we had the accident, I was dead altogether, the late Yancey Bowman, R.I.P., and when they put me back together, I was different. For two years now, you've been living with a man with a mind that never sleeps and never makes mistakes and does . . . can do . . . anything it wants. So you can't expect ordinary conduct from me, Bev, or rational behavior based on any reasoning you can understand. So if I do anything that . . . that hurts you, you mustn't be hurt. Can't you understand that?

Of course she wouldn't understand.

Why, he thought desperately, when they put me back together, didn't they iron out that little human wrinkle which made it possible for Pascal to make that remark about the heart having "reasons which reason does not know"?

He snorted softly. Heart. Hell of a name for it.

He lay on his back and watched the misty motion of surf-scattered moon on the ceiling. He let his mind float into the vague shadows, be one with them away from, above, beyond his insupportable, insoluble problem. And gradually he found himself back there again, two years ago—perhaps because of the momentum of his previous thinking, perhaps because, in reliving a time when there was Lois (and he could stand it) and a time when there was Lois (and he could not), it was a welcome thing to go into a time where Lois and Beverly and, for that matter, Yancey Bowman had little significance.

WHEN THE spaceship lifted, it retracted its berthing-feet; it was one of these that the Bowman sedan struck. The car continued under the ship, and the edge of the flat berthing-foot sliced it down to the beltline, leaving a carmine horror holding the wheel.

The ship hovered momentarily, then drifted over to the side of the road where the mangled automobile had come to rest. Directly above the car, it stopped. An opening appeared in the bottom of the ship and dilated like a camera iris. There was a slight swirl of dust and leaves, and then what was left of the car rose from the ground and disappeared into the ship. The ship then slid away to the clearing in the woods where it had lain hidden during its stay on Earth. Here it settled and concealed itself.

Exactly what was done to him, Yancey, of course, could not know. He was made aware of the end results, naturally. He knew that what had been injured had been repaired and that, in

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addition, certain changes had been made to improve the original.

For example, his jaw-hinges had been redesigned to eliminate a tendency to dislocation. His vermiform appendix was gone—not excised, but removed in some way which would indicate, in the event of an autopsy, that it had never formed in the first place. His tonsils had been replaced for reasons he could not understand, except that they were good ones.

And yet such anomalies as his left little toe, which since birth had been bent and lay diagonally across its neighbor, and a right eye which wandered slightly to the right when he was fatigued—these were left as they had originally been.

The eye was one of the most interesting items, he thought later; the toe had simply not been improved, but the eye had been restored with its flaw. His teeth, too, contained the same number of fillings and in the same places.

In sum, he had been altered only in ways that would not show.

He did know, however, *why* these things had been done. There was, inside that ship, an aura of sympathy mixed with remorse unlike anything he had ever felt. Another component was

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respect; an all-embracing, almost worshipful respect for living things.

Somewhere near where he lay in the ship's laboratory was a small covered shelf, on which lay a cicada, two grasshoppers, four summer moths and an earthworm, all casualties in his accident. Their cell structure, organic functions, digestive and reproductive processes were under study as meticulous as that which was being lavished on him. For them, restitution was to be made also, and they would be released in as good condition as this unthinkably advanced science could make them. The improvements seemed to be in the nature of a bonus, an implemented apology.

And there was no denying that as long as such repayment was made, the alien footsteps on Earth were fairly obliterated. Yet Yancey was always certain that this last was not a primary motive and that the aliens, whoever they were, wherever they came from, would have sacrificed anything, themselves included, rather than interfere with terrestrial and undoubtedly any other life.

THEY HAD done the same things with his car as they had done with him. He had not the slightest question that, if they had wished, they could have rebuilt the old sedan into a gleaming miracle, capable of flight and operable forever on a teacup of fuel. He found it looking as it had always looked, even to rust-spots and a crinkling around the windshield where moisture had penetrated the laminations of the safety glass. Yet there was a little more pickup, a little more economy; the brakes were no longer grabby in wet weather, and the cigarette lighter heated up in fewer seconds than it once did.

Who were these aliens? Where had they come from? What were they doing here and what did they look like?

He knew precisely as much as they permitted. He even knew why he knew as much as he did.

They could restore his crushed head and shoulder, and did. They could make slight improvements, and did. But even they could not predict every situation in which he might find himself in the future. It was deeply important to them, and it would be to him, to conceal the changes that had been made, or the reciprocal impacts between him and his society might deeply affect both.

The best concealment would be his full knowledge of what had been done and a solemn injunction to divulge nothing of it to anyone. That way he could never innocently perform public miracles and then be at a loss to explain.

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Most miraculous, of course, was the lowered impulse-resistance of his nervous system, including the total brain. He need no longer run over and over a thought sequence, like a wheel making a rut, to establish a synapse and therefore retain knowledge. He had quickened physical reactions. He had total recall (from the time of his release from the ship) and complete access to his previous memory banks.

Yet a prime directive among his "surgeons" seemed to have been a safeguarding of what his world called Yancey Bowman. Nothing — nothing at all — was done to change Yancey Bowman into something or someone else. He functioned a little better now, but he functioned as Yancey Bowman, just as the changes in his digestive system were basically improvements rather than replacements. He could get more energy out of less food, even as he could breathe higher concentrations of CO_2 than he could before. Likewise, he could be, and was, Yancey Bowman more efficiently than ever before.

Hence nothing was changed, even (or especially) the turmoil that was uppermost in his mind when he died.

SO IT was that after death had struck on a Friday morning, the same morning hour on Sunday revealed a strange sight—but only to some birds and a frightened chipmunk. Slipping out of Earth itself, the ship spread topsoil where it had lain, covered it with a little snow of early-fallen leaves, and shouldered into the sky.

It wheeled and for a moment paralleled the deserted highway below. The opening on its belly appeared and down through the shining air swept an aging two-door sedan, its wheels spinning and its motor humming. When it touched the roadway, there was not so much as a puff of dust, so perfectly were wheels and forward motion synchonized.

The car hurtled through a cut in a hilltop and around the blind turn on the other side and continued on its way, with Yancey Bowman at the wheel, seething inwardly at the unreachable stupidities of his wife.

And was there a moment of shock when he found himself alive and on his way unharmed, in his undamaged automobile? Did he turn and crane to see the dwindling speck in which his life had ended and begun again? Did he pull over to the side, mop his brow, and in a cascade of words exult over his new powers? Did Beverly demand to know what had happened, and would she not go out of her mind when she found that Friday was Sunday

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now, and that for her there had been no Saturday this week?

No, and no, and no. There was no shock, because he was certain to his marrow that this was the way it would be, that he would say nothing and that he must not look back. As for Beverly, her silence was proof enough that her convictions would suit the situation as well.

So he drove too fast and was too quiet, and his anger bubbled away until at length it concentrated into something quieter and rather uglier. As it formed, he drove more sensibly, and Beverly relaxed and leaned back, turning now and again to inspect the shutters or the drapes in a house they passed, watching the sky up ahead while she thought her own thoughts.

If you could call them thoughts, he reflected.

The product of his anger was a cold projection and took the form of an unspoken dictum to Beverly. He found that, with his new reflexes, he could give the matter his full attention, since now his hands seemed quite able to drive by themselves and even, it appeared, to read route signs.

So, echoing noiselessly in his mind, this structure builded:

This is not the end, Beverly, because the end must have been long since. You are not a woman living her life; you are a half-person living mine. Your ambition could not push me ahead, your senses could not know when I was in torture, your taste is not your own, and your abilities are limited to a dull search for what might please me and a trial-and-error effort to get it for me. But aside from me, you are nothing. You do not and you could not earn your own living. Cast out on your own resources, you could not so much as fill a receptionist's chair or even run a summer resort.

If nothing whatever had happened to me during these three days, what we have could never be called 'marriage' again, not by me. I have looked into the Sun, Beverly; I have flown; I can never crawl the mud with you again. I was too much for you before. What then am I now?

AND SO it ran, turning and elaborating itself, but always returning to a silent, scornful chant, buoyed up by glimpses of freedom and far horizons. After about an hour of this, he sensed her gaze and turned to look at her.

She met his eyes and smiled her old smile. "It's going to be a lovely day, Yance."

He turned abruptly back to the road. Something in his throat demanded attention and he

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found he could not swallow it. His eyes stung. He sat, unwillingly examining his feelings, and slowly it came to him that, among his other traits, the characteristic he had called empathy, the slipping on of other people's shoes, the world seen through the eyes of others—this quality, too, had suffered a sea-change.

What, to Beverly, had happened? Numbly, perhaps, she had been aware that something was amiss at the lake. He seriously doubted if she had identified the something. She'd known it was important—she had agreed to their leaving so abruptly without asking any questions.

But what was this "lovely day" business? Did she think that because their backs were turned to the unidentified threat, it had ceased to exist? Why, that must be *exactly* what she thought!

Oh, Beverly, Beverly, are you going to get a kick in the teeth!

But a day went by and no such thing happened. It didn't happen the first week, either, or in a month. Part of this was because of his work. He went back to it with a new sense, an awareness. He became totally sensitive to a condition called 'integration'—himself with his job, his job with his office, his office to the firm, and the firm itself in the economic mosaic. He wasted no motion in his job, and found himself spending his working day in pondering the structure of his surroundings. His first new effort was expressed through the suggestion box. It was perfect of its kind. It was an idea simple enough to have been thought of by his pre-accident self, and unlikely to be advanced by anyone not in this particular job. It eliminated the job and Yancey was advanced two grades and given new work to do. So he was busy, immersed, engaged, even at home. That in itself was enough to submerge his feelings about Beverly.

But it was only a part of his procrastination. (He called it that at first: sooner or later, he thought, there would be changes made.) Largely, he delayed because of this accursed empathy. Beverly was so *happy*. She was happy and proud. If he became unaccountably silent, she tiptoed about the place, quite convinced that the great man was dreaming up something else for the suggestion box. If he was short-tempered, she forgave. If he bought her something, or okayed something she had bought, she was grateful. Home was harmonious; Beverly was so happy she sang again. He realized that it had been a great while since she sang.

And all the while he knew how she felt. He knew it surely and painfully, and was fully aware of the impact she must suffer if

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he broached to her his inner thinking. He'd do it; oh, yes, he'd do it—some day. Meanwhile, it wouldn't hurt anything if she got that new winter coat she had eyed so wistfully in the Sunday paper.

SO A YEAR went by and he did nothing about the matter. Actually, he thought less about it after a year, though there were moments . . . but work was more engrossing than ever and home was such a pleasure, though a quiet one, and Beverly was fairly blooming. If a man has the virtue (or the curse) of empathy, he has to be kind. He must, for the most selfish of reasons—any time he strikes out at another human, he will find bruises on himself.

Once, suddenly, he asked her: "Beverly, have I changed?"

She looked puzzled.

"Since last year, I mean. Do I seem different?"

She thought about it. "I don't know. You're — nice. But you were always nice." She laughed suddenly. "You can catch flies!" she teased. "Why do you ask, Yance?"

"No reason. The new job and all." He passed the reference to flies. One had been bothering her last fall and he had absently reached out and caught it on the wing. It was the only time he had come near betraying his new talents. She had been astonished: In the eight years she had known him, he had never demonstrated coordination like that. She would have been more astonished if she had noticed that he caught the fly between his thumb and forefinger.

"The new job hasn't gone to your head," she said, "if that's what you mean."

He maneuvered a situation in the office which required attention in an out-of-town branch and arranged matters so that sending him out there was only logical. He was gone two weeks. He had seen to it that it was not the kind of task that required genius — just application and good detail work. He met two girls while he was there, a brilliant one high in the company, and one far better than anything the company would ever be able to hire. He left them alone, disliking himself because he knew, in his heart of hearts, whom he was being faithful to.

And it was good, good to get home. Due to what he had done out of town, he was raised another notch, but had to reorganize his new office, so there was no vacation that year. He could easily have analyzed this development to see whether he had purposely avoided a vacation, but he did not. He preferred not to know.

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There was a company picnic and Beverly sang. People reacted so enthusiastically — especially to Yancey, as if he had invented her—that he coaxed and goaded her into auditioning for a television show. She won the audition and appeared. She lost the audience vote to an eight-year-old boy with an accordian, but she was incandescently happy because Yancy had cared, Yancey had helped.

IN YANCEY'S private code, that was the Year of the Big Christmas. They took a week off and went to a ski lodge in New Hampshire. They did a number of things together and nothing was wrong about any of it. And one night they sat before a Christmas-card kind of fireplace with a crowd of kindred souls, drinking *glug* and roaring carols, until they were too sleepy to move.

After everyone else had gone to bed, they sat holding hands silently and watching the fire go out. As it will at such moments, his life whisked across his inner eye (this happens when one is living, not when one is dying) and stopped here at this hearth; and on it was superimposed the uneasy question *What am I doing here?* and over him came a flood of tenderness for Beverly, poor Beverly.

For the first time, it occurred to him that this fantastic thing which had happened to him might have a grim and horrible result. His metabolic efficiency, his apparent immunity to everything from the common cold up, his outright inability to get too little rest or too little food . . . suppose he should live—well, not forever, but—

He glanced at his wife, and though she was young-looking for her age, his quick mind vividly supplied a wrinkle here and there a little sag. He would be able to conceal his feelings about it, of course, but would she? Empathetically, he lived through a brief torture with her future, seeing her wither while he went on as he was.

He averted his face and his eyes filled with dammed-up tears.

Gently she disengaged her hand. He felt it stroking, stroking his wrist. And she had the wit, or the luck, to say absolutely nothing as she did it.

When he thought back on it, much later, he thought, too, that though there were many women who could do many things Beverly couldn't do, not one of them would have done just that in just that way.

In the spring, sensitive as he was to the feelings of his coworkers, he turned down a promotion. This would benefit him

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far more in the long run. And again it was summer and this time there would be a vacation.

Well—where?

He would choose a place and Beverly would say, "If that's what you want, darling," and off they'd go.

He thought and he thought about it. He had total recall and he recreated a great many scenes for himself. He all but decided and then he hesitated; and then, sitting at his desk in the office, he said aloud, "No! Not yet!" and startled some people.

THEY went to New England, to a place new to them, craggy, rugged, sparkling, where sailboats notched the skyline and the wind smelled clean, unused by anyone else. For four days, they fished and swam, danced and dug gooeyducks. On the fifth day, they stayed snugly indoors while the sky pressed down like a giant's palm. At three o'clock, the small-craft warnings went up. At four, the Coast Guard called and warned them away from their rented shack; yes, it was a hurricane, a real hurricane and not just a storm.

They loaded the car haphazardly and tumbled into it, and already there was a blinding fog of spume blowing horizontally across the coast road. They ground up the hill to the town and pulled into the hotel yard.

The hotel, of course, was full, with a bed laid in the linen room and a cot set up behind the desk.

"What are we going to do?" Beverly wailed. It was not distress. Not yet—this was exciting.

"We're going to have a drink," he said. "Then we're going to have some hot chowder. Then we're going to think about what we're going to do."

So, with their lungs full of ozone and their eyes full of sparks, they went to the dining room.

There was a picture which, say, a year ago, Yancey used to call to mind so often that it was as familiar as his safety razor. A slim back, wide shoulders clad in rich brown moleskin, lamplight glancing from dark obedient hair, and a long, brown hand resting lightly against an ivory cheek. When he saw it now, right before his eyes, he discounted it as an unwelcome phantom, a trick of the charged air.

But Beverly squeezed his elbow and cried, "Yance—look!" And before he could draw a breath, she sprang away from him to the table.

"Lois! Lois, whatever in the world are you doing here?"

This, Yancey told himself heavily, just had to happen. He went forward. "Hello, Lois."

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"Well!" It was a single syllable, but it contained warmth and welcome and . . . but how would you ever know, even when she smiled? A mask can smile. "Sit down. Please sit down, Beverly, Yancey."

There was a rush of small talk. Oh, yes, she had sold the resort last spring. Worked for a while in town. Resigned, looking for something better. Came up here to let the wind blow the smog out of her hair. "Now I'm afraid it'll take the hair, too."

Oh, yes, Beverly was saying, so warmly, so proudly . . . two promotions . . . turned down *another* one. He'll run the place in another year, just you watch . . . And a good deal more, while Lois watched her hands and smiled a small smile. "What about you, Lois? Are you married or anything?"

"No," said Lois huskily, "I'm not married—" and here Yancey looked away; he couldn't bear to meet her eyes while she said it— "or anything."

They had a drink, and another, and then some superlative New England chowder, and beer, and another drink. And then it was over and Yancey, paying the check, was telling himself glumly you did fine, boy; so if you're a little on the silent side for a day or two, what's the difference? I'm glad it's over. (But I wish...)

RISING, Beverly said, "You're staying here?"

Lois smiled oddly. "There's nothing they can do about it."

Before he could stop himself, Yancey said, "Now what exactly does that mean?"

"I just got in an hour and a half ago. I never dreamed I'd need a reservation. Funny, isn't it, after my experience? Anyway, no vacancies. I shall just sit here until they want to close the place. I will then be a problem and it'll be up to them to solve it." She laughed quietly. "I've solved worse ones in my time."

"Lois, you can't!" Beverly cried. "They'll make you sleep on the bar!"

She shrugged, really not caring.

"Yancey," said Beverly, flushed and urgent, "do you remember a time when two wet strangers couldn't find their beds and what happened to them?"

He did meet Lois's eyes this time. This was when his heart began hammering.

Beverly said, "Now it's our turn. We're going down the coast. We'll find a place. Come on. Come *on,* Lois!"

Yancey thought, listen to her, taking the bit in her teeth. Doesn't she usually find out first what I want? And he answered himself, no; most of the time she just does what I want without asking.

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And, he told himself further, stop talking like a damn fool.

Ten miles south, there was a town with a hotel. Full up. Four miles farther, a motel. Packed to the eaves. The next stretch was twenty miles and it was getting late. It was raining the kind of rain they had slogged through to Lois's cabin two years before, but this time they had a howling gale along with it.

And by the time they reached the next town, the warnings were in. The hurricane, true to its unpredictible breed, had swung east, leaving rain and a maddened sea, but no further danger. So they drove into the slick, shining streets of a city still quaking in its boots, but vastly relieved.

Here and there a store was open. There were three hotels, two of them full. They stopped at an all-night drugstore to ask directions to the third and Lois bought cigarettes and Beverly found a book-club edition of *Anna Karenina* and scooped it up with joy; she said she'd always wanted to read it.

The third hotel had one double with bath.

"Twin beds?"

The clerk nodded. Yancey looked at Lois, but her eyes were cloaked. He looked at Beverly and she said, "Why not? We can fit in a twin bed. I'm not very big."

No, he thought, you're not.

Lois said, "Beverly—"

"Shh," said Beverly. "We'll take it," she told the clerk.

LOIS turned again. Now she was looking up at the ceiling with him. Think of that, he thought acidly — here we are sharing some antiseptic moonbeams!

His biting thought was protection for a very brief while. His heart began again. It shook him with each beat. It shook the bed, the walls, the building, the beaten cliff outside, making it hurl back the sea with even greater violence.

There was the softest butterfly-wing touch on his chest. Beverly had opened her eyes.

Yancey thought madly, it's like one of those meaningless conjugations they give you in first-year French. I stare up into the darkness, you stare up into the darkness, she stares up into the darkness . . .

Beverly wriggled up closer to him. She put her hand behind his head, pulling it toward her, and put her mouth on his ear.

Barely audible, her breath said, "Darling, what is it? What do you want?"

What did he want? Nothing, of course. Nothing he could have. Nothing, certainly, that he should have.

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He shook his head.

Beverly crept back until her head was on his shoulder again. She lay still. She slid one hand over his chest, to rest lightly on his hammering heart.

Lois sighed quietly and turned over, away from them. The wind laughed and laughed outside, and another breaker smashed and spouted. The room grew black, then silver again.

An hour-long five minutes passed.

Abruptly, Beverly sat up. "I can't sleep," she said clearly.

Lois was silent. Yancey watched Beverly. The silver light made everything in the room look like an overexposed photograph, but Beverly's flesh seemed pink—the only thing in the whole wild, pulsing world that had any color but gray or black or silver.

Beverly swung her legs out, stood up and stretched in the moonlight. She was small and firm and—*pink?* Was she really pink or was that a memory, too, like the reconstruction of the two kinds of darkness on Lois's pillow that to his mind looked like Lois's face and hair?

What a beautiful complementation, he thought hotly; how balanced an equation expresses this chaos! Beverly, small and fair, open, simple, direct. Lois, tall, slender, dark, devious, complex. And each so clearly lacking just what the other—had.

Beverly said, "I have nineteen chapters of *Anna Karenina* to read." She knelt on Yancey's bed briefly, reached across to the night table and scooped something up. Then she took the book off the highboy and went into the bathroom. Yellow light appeared starkly under the closed door.

Yancey lay quite still, looking at the line of light. He heard Lois's sheets.

At last he rolled over and looked at her. He could see the sliver of yellow again, across her eyes. She was half-sitting, resting her weight on one slender arm. She was looking at him, or past him, to the closed door.

"What was that she picked up from the night table, Yancey?"

"Her watch."

Lois made a sound—perhaps, "Oh." She sank down, slowly, until she rested on her elbow. She *was* looking at him now. He would know that even if he closed his eyes.

HE LAY still, wondering if Lois could hear his heart. She probably could. Beverly probably could, right through the door.

He wondered, with shattering inconsequentiality, whether Beverly really liked red drapes.

Lois made a slight motion with

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her chin toward the yellow gleam. She whispered, "I couldn't do that." And again the gesture. "What she did then."

A great, hungry yearning came over him, but at the moment, incredibly, it seemed to have no direction. It yawned somewhere beneath him, waiting to engulf him. And then, seeing the polished yellow lines in Lois's eyes, it came to him which of these women was simple and direct, and which was subtle and deep and complex.

"I couldn't do that," Lois had said. How many other things could Beverly do that Lois could not?

What kind of woman was Beverly?

For the very first time, Yancey Bowman asked himself what had happened to Beverly the day he was killed. He'd assumed she was simply in cold storage while they put him back together. He'd assumed . . . how could he assume such a thing? He had never even asked about her. That was impossible! Unnatural!

But of course—he wasn't to ask. He would not have thought of it and the chances were that he could not have asked her even if he'd thought to.

Why could he think of it now?

It must be time to think of it. Something had happened to him, permitting him to. Qualifying him to. But— he hadn't changed; he couldn't change. He was built and rebuilt and designed and redesigned to be Yancey Plus. What change could . . .

Supposing, he told himself, they had a very young thing to rebuild. Wouldn't they build it so that it could go on growing? Then—he could have grown. How? *How?*

Well, what would he have done in this same mad situation, two years ago, even after he left the spaceship?

He wouldn't have lain here these swift seconds, speculating; that was for sure.

"I couldn't do that," Lois had whispered.

Supposing Beverly had been killed, too, and changed as he had been changed. He had never told her what he knew: why would she have told him? Wasn't the prime purpose to improve a little, but to change nothing? He was Yancey Plus, who went right ahead ruling the roost, accepting his wife's quiet variety of slave labor. Wouldn't she go right on being Beverly, giving him always what he wanted? And if she were Beverly . . . Plus, wouldn't she do . . . just this?

WHAT'S the matter with me, he cried silently — why didn't I ask her? Why couldn't I see?

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He found, to his astonishment, that he had only to ask this question to have it answered. Nothing responded; it was just that the answer, lying within him, was uncovered. *You may not.*

I never could ask her. I can't now. I shall never be able to. And—I don't want to, I don't need to!

And she can't—*may not*— ask me!

Then it was, with a surge of relief that made his head spin, that his heart eased and he smiled. He knew now how he had changed, how he had grown. He *knew* Beverly had changed. He knew, all at once, what to do now and what to do for the rest of his life with Beverly.

All this in seconds, and he became aware again of the yellow lights in Lois's long eyes. He changed the subject by using her exact words. "I couldn't do that," he whispered.

Lois nodded slowly. She sank back on the pillow and closed her eyes. He thought she trembled. He didn't know. He didn't much care. He turned over and filled his lungs, as he had not been able to do for more than an hour because of his leaping heart. "*Beverly!*" he bellowed.

The book fell on the tiles. There was silence for a moment and then the door opened.

"Yes, Yance?"

"Get back to bed, idiot. You can read that book some other time. You need your sleep."

"I just—all right, Yance, if you want."

She switched off the light and came in. A moonbeam swept across her face as she approached. She was looking across him at Lois, her lips trembling. She got into bed. He put his arms around her, gently, humbly. She turned to him and suddenly held him so tight that he almost cried out.

—THEODORE STURGEON

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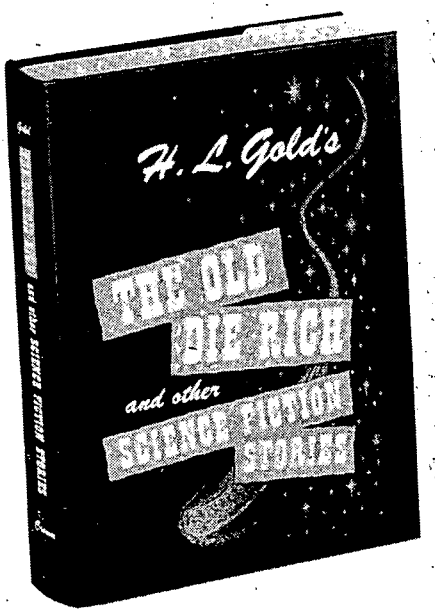

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